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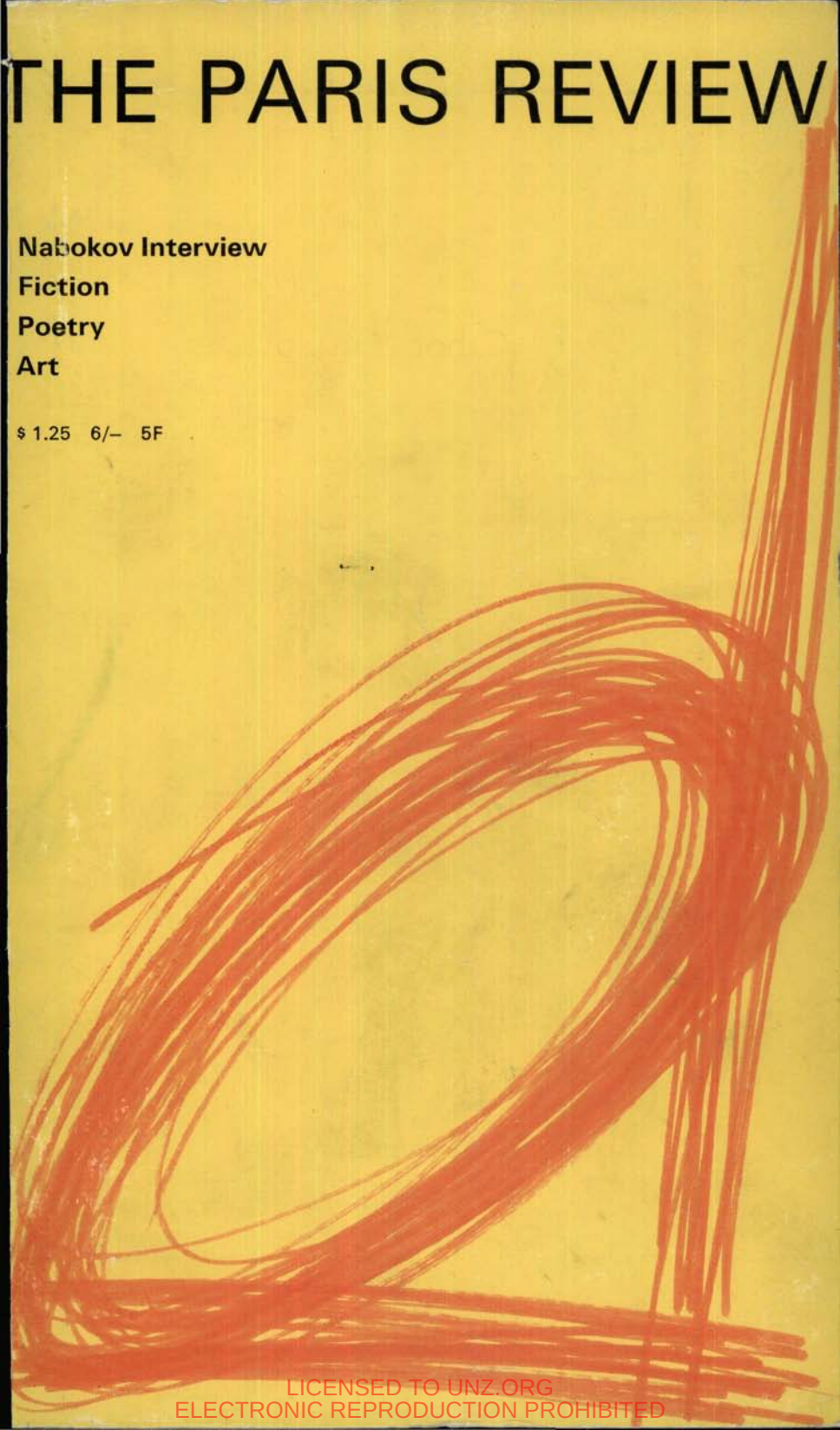

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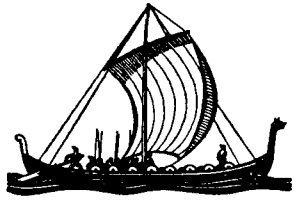

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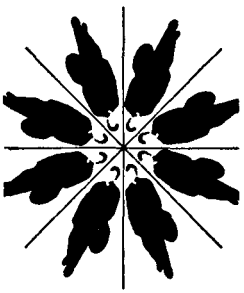

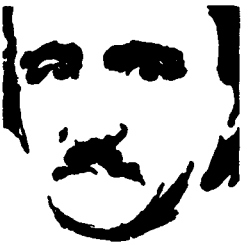

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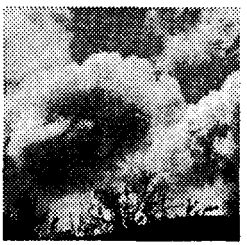

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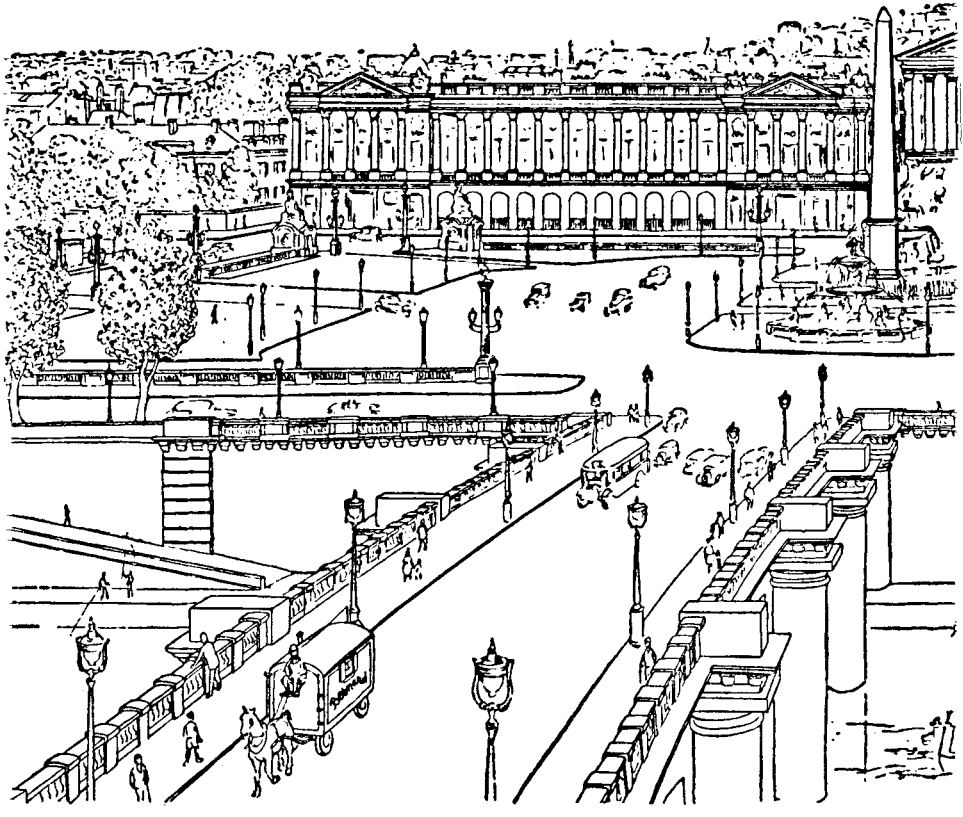

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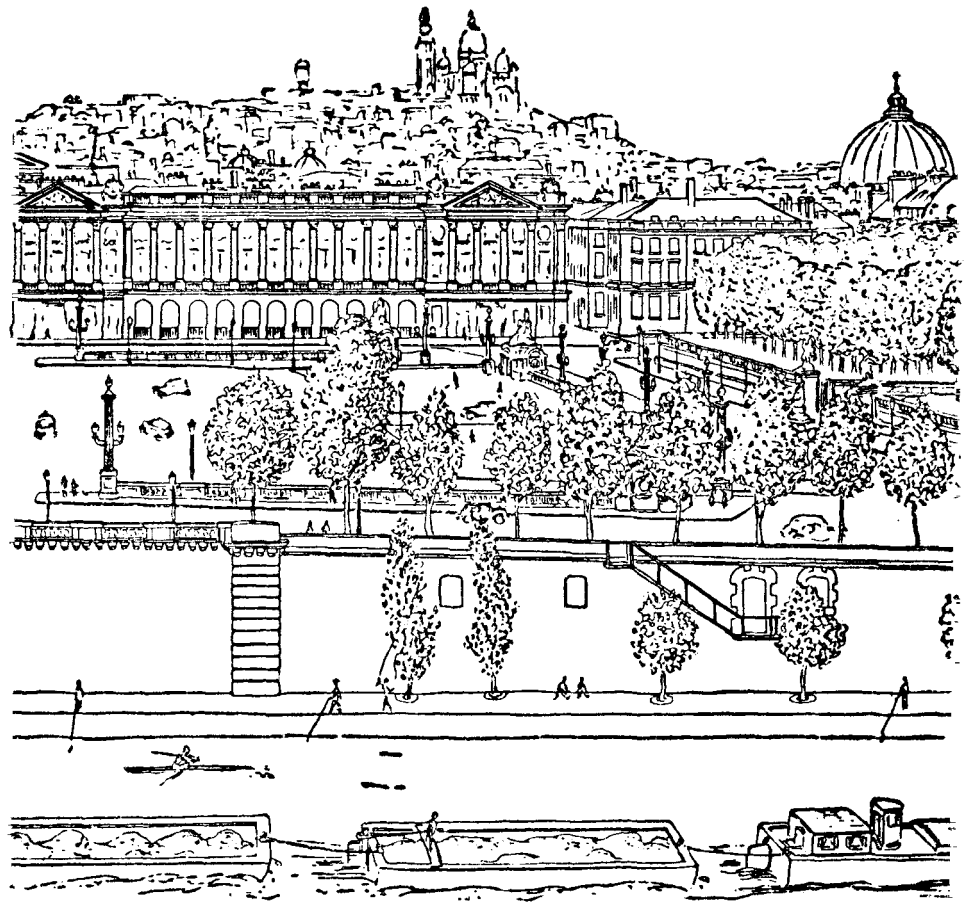

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Bleat Blodgette

John Phillips

I

His mother's face had not always looked so round. He could remember it pale and maidenly, when the cheekbones showed and when it was soft but not fleshy and relatively unpolluted by woe. Mrs. Blodgette wasn't forty yet. Nothing made her face so luminous as tears could, and she must have been only discovering that this was so. She seemed to make a cosmetic asset of it: no rouge or powder flawed her cheeks, to be caked and corrugated by her tears. The spring twilight gave his mother's moist skin a near Rubenesque luster, he believed, being strangely moved by colors at this his most formative age. Colors had on him the power of staying his instincts. It was only when he thought he couldn't stand another word she said that he'd hit her across the mouth. He was callow and high strung; she ought to have known she was putting him under a great strain.

"My poor boy," she'd been weeping. "It doesn't matter about me, but when he turns his back on his two sons, then I say it is his black blood coming out. He's done it before. I knew this would happen."

"It's not, Mah."

"My poor boy, what are you going to do?"

"It's not black blood."

"My poor darling."

And for this, for this Mrs. Blodgette had come from 82nd Street to the western Massachusetts village where her son

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had almost completed the expensive secondary education his great aunt was providing him. As it were from Ghent to Aix, she'd sped here by taxicab and Pullman car and, sparing herself in her desperate haste none of the inconveniences of travel in that year 1940, had changed at Springfield to a Greyhound Bus—bringing news of Papa. She also brought for reading on the train a contemporaneous book of child psychology, *The Twig Is Bent*. Though an erratic reader, she plainly had given it considerable attention. He noticed almost as soon as he saw her that the jacket was torn and there were smudges of ink where she'd marked certain pages.

He met her on the steps of Headmaster's House, that reception place of parents, and saw how her face was radiant with emergency. "What's the matter, Mah?"—"Poor Steven!" She tried to clasp him in her short arms when *The Twig Is Bent* flopped open on the bricks and the torn halves of the jacket were swept off in the May breeze. He had to chase over the lawn to retrieve them. "How come you read this junk?" he asked her, although the reason was on her face. "Something's happened. Your Mother must be the one who tells you," she said.

Supper was over at the school and during the short interim before Evening Prayer, shirt-sleeved boys were all round outdoors chasing tennis balls and playing nigger baby. His mother was nervous and frumpy in her brown dress. She was the same height as her son. Even some severely astigmatic schoolmate pausing in his play and squinting through the growing dusk might at once perceive their kinship. They can see us, he realized, with an excruciation strong and cruel, beyond the categories of every book of juvenile psychology. He took his little mother, shoved her, all but hurled her through the screen door. "Oh, Steven!" He tumbled after her into Headmaster's Parlor and the door sprang shut against his heel.

"Here's your book," he said. "Why do you have to read that junk?"

His mother put the book on the table, where it rested among the cups and sandwiches. Wednesday afternoons Mrs. Kew, the Headmaster's wife, served tea to Faculty Wives,

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but by this hour the room was abandoned. Entirely to themselves, mother and son, they had the vase of tulips, the chipped white and green crockery, the knives and spoons, the curtains of smelly yellow muslin, and the considerable length of the leather sofa on which they sat at distant ends. He thought of what to say to make up for shoving her through the door. From now on he would call her Mama as politely as could be; no more talking to her like some slob.

She told him, "Something has happened. You will have to be brave."

"About my father," he said.

"I know you're going to be a brave boy."

"It's some lady."

"No *lady*." His mother had the little handkerchief in her hand ready for when they would need it.

"He got married."

"Poor darling, how do I explain? You must be brave. Naturally, it's not our affair. I was so afraid you'd see it in the newspapers, because this is a married woman."

"The hell with the newspapers. Everybody has the right to live their own life, I guess."

The mother smote the sofa with her handkerchief. "All his life Papa has only thought about one person and that person is himself!"

She would not stop talking. He only stood there beside the window as far from her as he could decently be. Outdoors on the lawns the boys ran free, throwing tennis balls that soared up, and up in the evening sky. They shouted while his mother talked, and then he heard the chapel bell tolling down an end to the day's frivolity. The boys gathered up their coats and began trudging off to Evening Prayer while tightening their neckties, and the sun cast pale crepuscular colors on their shirts. He felt an impulse of love for his fellows, those other creatures of this hothouse who might some day have to fight the world. Their turn would come, they'd see their family names debauched in newspapers. One boy, last winter, had his father fall drunk out of a hotel room he was hiring with a showgirl. A father squashed like an old tomato on the sidewalk, and this

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boy learned about it in the morning paper they showed him at breakfast.

"In Catholic countries," his mother explained, "the conventions are different from ours. Divorce is an unusual thing. The Europeans have customs...marriage customs...that may seem hypocritical to you and me."

"Mah." He winced for her; he'd lived in France, he'd written a term paper about Henry the Eighth. "Mah, do you think I'm a child?" His excruciation for her was worse than last year, on the occasion of his sixteenth birthday, when she traveled up to the school convinced it was *her Duty*—his father having abdicated his—to explain to him how babies are made.

"She is a rich woman from New Mexico married to an Austrian nobleman. There isn't the *possibility* of a divorce," his mother was saying. "She's Baroness Stoeffenblus and she is not a lady, Steven. She's not Austrian either."

"I still bet she's French." He could see the fleeting wraith of this baroness. A creature of fantastic allure, a courtesan; she had diamonds and a beauty spot and a towering wig. She was Ethel Merman, Madame Du Barry, whom he saw on his father's lap, kissing his father, tickling his chin, patting the bald spot on his head. Sugar Daddy. He saw a big photograph of them on the front page of the New York Journal-American, and a scarlet headline and columns of soul-baring print.

"She isn't French," his mother corrected him, very shrill: "Papa's Baroness is nothing but the daughter of a cop-per min-er." Her voice quailed on the syllables and broke, and he couldn't stand to hear her. "A rich vulgar woman who married a fortune hunter for his name...poor Steven...poor children..." She got going again on the black Blodgette blood.

He would bring her to her senses. "Mah, that's crazy!" He would shake her if she made him do it.

"You are my brave boy."

"Now cut it out, Mah."

"You are so brave. Now I can tell Aunt Norah and Little Howard that you were so brave when I told you."

He would ask her a question, calm her, divert her. Quickly

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ask any old question. "Mah, how do you say that name Stoffus?"

Toward the window and the setting sun, his mother turned her round, uncomprehending face. "Stoeffenblus?" she asked, and began by syllables. "Stuff—en—" she said. "Stuff—" The rose red light glistening on her moist face gave it almost a Rubens color that made him forget what was happening. If only she had sat completely still in that light and not, mistaking his pain for helplessness, darted on over at him almost jubilantly on her tiny ballerina's feet.

"My poor boy." She came at him as if the tears were of joy, and flung out her arms almost triumphantly to receive him. "My brave boy."

His fist flew up high like one of the tennis balls. He sighted for her open mouth and hit it, he would never be sure how hard. She recoiled but she didn't fall. The backs of his fingers felt wet and tingled from the touch of her teeth, and he believed she was crying something at him that he couldn't hear. He was too surprised to move, and for the first time in his life a vice of pain clamped round his chest.

"Can I interest anyone in Evening Prayer?"

Dr. Kew, Emmanuel's Headmaster, poked head and shoulders through the screendoor. It may have been that when he asked his question he was attempting a quip of his, giving the old "Tennis anyone?" an ecclesiastical twist. The Reverend Dr. Kew, not heavily endowed with tact, was all the same a kindly man. He passed the academic year in daily contact with traumata and still he was no voyeur or glutton; he would never have intruded on this ugly scene except that the chapel bell was tolling, bringing out his shepherd's instincts. "Last call for prayers," Dr. Kew called in to the Blodgettes cheerfully, exactly as he would any other son and mother who seemed to have forgotten the hour. "Last call for chapel."

"Oh thank God," Mrs. Blodgette sighed. "Dr. Kew, it's you."

The Headmaster stepped into his Parlor, a well-shouldered, fine-eyed man, trim, vigorously middle-aged, his gray forelock subtly tousled as if to say that he had been a boy him-

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self and that if he'd grown up to be an ordained minister, it was because he loved boys and was interested in their problems. It was a standing joke in school that Dr. Kew could have doubled for Spencer Tracy any day as Father Flannigan in *Boys Town*. A two-fisted man of God, Dr. Kew arrived on the untidy scene clasping the Book of Common Prayer against a distinctly Anglican surplice. "Mrs. Blodgette, good evening. Good evening, Blodgette. You didn't hear the bell?" he said. "Something the matter with your hand?"

"Good evening, sir." Blodgette had his offending fist behind his back.

"Oh, Dr. Kew, thank God you came," Mrs. Blodgette said.

"Well now," the Headmaster began. "Can't be as bad as that now can it?" He had only a minute of his time to soothe this nerve-racked mother. In these circumstances, as dispensation, he excused Blodgette off from Evening Prayer, and left them.

Wrung with penance, the boy stayed with his mother, to be squeezed, kissed, copiously forgiven, and forgiving in his turn. In a dismal bathroom they washed their faces on Mrs. Kew's guest towels. When it was time to go, his mother reached out to kiss him through the open door of the taxicab. "I forgot my *The Twig Is Bent*!" she said, and he had to run back to the parlor and fetch the book. For that she kissed him several times. The last thing she said before he shut the taxi door was that she felt much better, "much much better."

2

Twenty-four hours passed, and then when the gloaming came again, with the shouts and the tennis balls flying outdoors, Blodgette was summoned to Headmaster's Study. In this barnlike room which gave off Headmaster's Parlor, the Head Man was waiting there in his vestments. "Well now, Steve, I'm afraid I have sad tidings."

"Yes sir."

He wasn't going to ask if his mother had swallowed a

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bunch of sleeping pills. Or had she by chance defenestrated? He understood at once that his mother was dead. He saw a vision of the New York Journal-American that announced her red-headlined death, so hard and bright he had to blink.

"This afternoon I had a telephone conversation with Mrs. ..." the Headmaster searched for the name. "Mrs. Safford."

"Yes sir. She's my great aunt."

"Well now, your aunt is good and mad at you, Steve." Dr. Kew was being kindly, and yet even after six years' acquaintance, it was embarrassing to have the Head Man call you by the diminutive of your Christian name. "Can you think why?" he asked.

"My aunt's always mad about something."

"Well now, your mother has had some sort of attack, I gather."

"A nervous attack."

"The doctor has sent her to bed. Complete rest and quiet."

"Then it's nothing, sir. Our family lives on nerves."

"That's a mighty funny thing for a fellow to say about his family, Steve."

"It's a mighty funny family, sir."

"Well now," said the Headmaster, low in his throat, that mildly gruff and yet to many endearing "well now" which a generation of Emmanuel graduates had come to mimic, with nostalgia. "Mrs. Safford—your aunt believes there is a connection between your mother's visit yesterday and her... and what happened to her when she got home." Dr. Kew tilted his face upward, his voice rose heavenward: "Far be it for me to inquire what happened with Mother in the parlor last evening. There are terrible powers dwelling inside us. Which one of us does not crave forgiveness for these terrible powers which visit us from the dark sides of our souls, Steve, and make us wretched and afraid?"

"Well, we already forgave each other, sir."

"That's fine, that's very good," said Dr. Kew, who had been drumming his fingers quite a bit on the cover of his prayer book. "Well now, but that was before Mother had

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this...bad turn, should I say? I wonder about now, this minute. I wonder if *right now* you are enjoying full forgiveness?"

"I don't suppose I am, sir."

"'The Lord is my shepherd.'" Facing the ceiling, the Headmaster uttered some of the Twenty-third Psalm. He said, "To me these are the most beautiful words ever written. They tell us what forgiveness means... 'His Rod and His Staff will comfort you.'" He examined the boy. "Are you embarrassed by that? I'm not."

"His Divine Providence will absolve you. Give you clean hands and a pure heart. But you must seek it."

"Yes."

"Be a man. Manful."

"Yes."

"Seek and be manful."

"Yes."

3

Blodgette was excused tonight from Study Hour. He was to stay in chapel after Evening Prayer and offer his solitary conscience to the Lord, stay until the floodgates opened and bathed him in forgiveness. He might stay all night, for he had the Headmaster's permission.

Emmanuel Academy's chapel was an architectural anomaly thrust up from the center of a sedulously Georgian campus that was a particular pride of old Emmanuelers.

A Yankee cynosure, a panoramic symmetry of bricks and white columns which, erected as it was foursquare upon Hamilton's Federalist terrain, would have delighted even the eccentric Thomas Jefferson, a rhapsodic alumnus, Torbert Case, '96, had written in a fund-raising brochure. *Delighted too are Emmanuel's sons whose generosity (all the more remarkable in this age of fiscal chaos and decadent government!) has traditionally maintained the high order of both buildings and grounds. Our task is a self-perpetuating one, and one which today more than ever, to employ a phrase, costs money!*

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The chapel, though, had been erected in a less chaotic age, the aftermath of the war with Spain. Considerable of the brutality and bombast associated with the battleship *Maine* was captured in its lines, and the building expense had been borne alone by three rich alumni in honor of a departed classmate. The architect, like many Emmanuel graduates, had attended Harvard at least long enough to join a final club and he must have fallen in the Victorian-Gothic spell of Memorial Hall—that flabbergasting monument to the quantity of Harvard men exterminated in the War of Secession. And evidently this architect had been as well a man of eclectic taste; the chapel had diminutive flying buttresses on two of its sides and it was a hybrid phantasy: round and square, flat and thin, and amalgamating brick, slate, stucco, porphyry, oak, copper, stained glass and mullion among its ingredients. Set above the entrance was a hatchment of Vermont marble. It announced the name and dates of the prominent Emmanueler to whose memory, as though some insidious alternative to God, this presumptuous fane was built. And here lay a duplicity scalding to the conscience of Steven Safford Blodgette, '40, having been baptized in infancy an Episcopalian Christian of terrifying faith.

Three years ago last February, having come to the Years of Discretion and having the full Instruction of his church, Blodgette received the Laying on of Hands—in this chapel—from Diocesan Bishop Walsh, a graduate of Emmanuel who was by no coincidence Honorary Chairman of the Academy's Board of Trustees.

His Confirmation, he fully understood, was the clear consequence of unnatural, inward events that had happened before Christmas vacation. As usual, when he had to go home to Eighty-second Street, the prospect had brought on such fits of brooding as theologians have named *Tristitia.* He thought of being back with the aged maids, his great aunt and mother and little brother in French velvet knickerbockers, all the descendant Saffords fulfilling their destiny like spirits stifled in an attic. He saw their grotesque significance, the ashen curse upon his stock, his *morbus originis;* from this he had a sense of

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Original Sin more harrowing than the manly notion that Dr. Kew had in mind in weekly Christian Studies class when he read to his students excerpts from Cardinal Newman's *Apologia*. Blodgette was fourteen years old when he experienced that first early terror of being a rabbit cast down kicking in the glacial night. All Hell was a frozen land from which he begged to be redeemed.

The time came when Blodgette took his place in a rank of kneeling boys. He feared his soul would die before he felt on his head the Bishop's hand as the Bishop passed from head to head bowed along the altar rail. In swirling raiment the Bishop hovered over him and in trembling baritone inflected the mounting phrases of the liturgy, in half-song, "Defend, O Lord, this thy CHILD with thy heavenly GRACE..." and on to the next boy. Blodgette's scalp thrilled. Fearfully he touched the spot where Bishop Walsh's hand had lain. His hair was warm; he could tell that a miraculous deliverance had been granted him.

Afterward, it was easier to go home and almost painless to rejoin the family circle. He grew unconscionably jealous of his redemption. He was afraid of doubts which threatened it, and horribly afraid of the contempt he felt for the Higgs Memorial Chapel as a monument to Mammon and degrading to the Lord.

His scorn was centered on the marble hatchment. On it was cut out a fat cross that got encrusted with bird droppings in the spring. Below the carved cross the words *In Honored Memory of Thy Faithful Servant* were followed by the name and dates of the honored Higgs. To hear Blodgette decry the inscription as a sacrilege, his friends were amazed. "It's the *plaque* that's in honor of the guy," they would remonstrate. "You wack, that's different from the chapel." "It is like hell," Blodgette would say. He was a crackpot on this subject. One day he made so bold to bring it up in the Headmaster's Christian Studies class.

They were discussing sanctity; Dr. Kew was asking for definitions of the word. "Sir!" Blodgette raised his hand, was recognized, and his tongue ran off with his inchoate thought.

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"Sanctity isn't putting up a chapel or something holy like that when it's supposed to be for God and then go dedicate it to a graduate of the school, sir. Just because he used to be a fat cat millionaire. Sanctity means it's supposed to be for God! I mean, don't you see what I mean?"

"Well now," said Dr. Kew, the benign Spencer Tracy smiling on the clear young faces. "Blodgette raises an interesting point." He liked a boy who had the grit to speak out what was on his mind so long as it wasn't just smart aleck. The Head Man paused to examine the faces of Blodgette's classmates. In the averted eyes and hand-clutched mouths before him was evidence of laughter, and the Head Man played upon it. "Well now." He cocked his face to the ceiling, showed a nice sense of timing. "I'd better put it this way—It *may be* our friend raises an interesting point...but Blodgette gets so all-fired passionate when he talks that I'll be double-all-day darned if I can catch a word he says!"

There was a cachinnation in the class, of sheep calls and mirthful voices ragging. "Bleat!" "Tell about the chapel, Bleat." "Bleat, Bleat, he can't be beat!" The Headmaster easily ignored the breach of discipline.

"It's not funny!" The boy was incensed. "I'm not a smart aleck, sir. I mean it."

They laughed as the shepherds laughed at the boy who cried wolf so much. In the wheels within wheels of schoolboy life each presumed to know the other's fears and foibles better than he knew his own. Bleat Blodgette had never been serious in his life. If their disbelief was cruel, Bleat had himself to blame.

4

He had chosen to be a clown from his first weeks at Emmanuel, a new boy entering the bottom class. He was small, imberbe, odd of face, unshorn, looking for all the world like a Bedlington terrier.

Vindictive Mr. Frapp, who taught elementary French,

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could not forgive the preposterous boy his fortuitous knowledge of the language. This master once caught his over-qualified pupil drowsing in the classroom. "*Qu'est-ce que vous avez, Blodgette?*" Today's lesson was the idiomatic uses of *avoir*. "*Vous AVEZ sommeil?*" Mr. Frapp commenced to enunciate for the class. "*Oui, Monsieur Blodgette A sommeil... Monsieur Blodgette A mal à la tête, peut-être?...Comme il A des cheveux affreux! Il A besoin de se faire couper les cheveux. Nous AVONS tous honte de Monsieur Blodgette. J'AI horreur de Monsieur Blodgette!*" Mr. Frapp stamped his feet; his pupils were a dull bunch and his fey sally was wasted on them. In Blodgette, however, he had a whipping post for the vexations of twenty-five years of teaching school, for his thwarted scholarship and unacclaimed translations of Pierre Louys. "I give you fair warning. If you have not been to the barber by tomorrow—tomorrow, is that clear? I shall with my own razor personally shave your head until it glows in the light of the moon. *Sek ek.*" Mr. Frapp ended with his horrid laugh.

Blodgette came to class the next day shorn in the village barber's fruitbowl cut like the tonsure of a novice monk. Where the ringlet curls dangled over his ears yesterday, his scalp shone a fishy white.

"Blodgette, let's have a look at you." The stridulous tone of his voice warned that Mr. Frapp was succumbing to a hysterical quirk. Boys sensed the black anthology of this master's temper. A slight person with an aesthete's moustache, his seizures gave him a rude strength as he pitched boys across doorsills, and kicked their shins.

Blodgette stepped in the front of the room, and Mr. Frapp snatched an ear that winged from his shaved scalp. "Ow sir."

"Turn."

"Sir, cut that out. Sir, please."

"*Sek ek.* So we can have a look at you. Turn."

Blodgette was twisted full circle on the pivot of his ear so all could see the barber's work.

"*Sek ek.* We have a cropped sheep with us."

"You better quit that, sir."

"A cropped sheep, *ek.*"

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"Sir, I said quit that," Blodgette heard the roots of his ear crunching; his shoes were sliding and the floor spun. He saw chairfeet, boysfeet, chalkdust, schoolbooks whirling down on the floor, and down there he saw a delicate foot in a womanish shoe that tapered to a vicious point on an oxblood toe. He stamped on Mr. Frapp's foot, hard on top of the metatarsal arch. The ear-crunching stopped; he saw Mr. Frapp's eyes bug out and mouth open as wide as it would go. "I didn't want to hurt you, sir. You were rooking my ear."

"*Hurt?*" The master seized Blodgette by the collar and abandoned himself to batter the boy's shin with his pointed shoe toe. Blodgette kicked back and an all out kicking fight was on.

From their seats the pupils watched, entranced to see one of their own, hardly more than a decade on this earth, giving as good as he got from the freakish adult. Ever after, for year upon year of their excited discussions, the skirmish was known as The French Shin Fight.

When the class was dismissed, they gathered round in the corridor, laughing and laughing for him. It was then that someone named him "Bleat"—for his sheep's look. He had them; he would ever be secure in his name and fame, and the new power of being the hero fool. The French Shin Fight, in which his righteous anger had exploded into slapstick, taught him who Bleat was and how to be Bleat. He could always get them to laugh.

5

Christian Studies class ended and they clustered in the corridor, making an audience for the hero fool. "Tell us about the chapel." "Yeah, tell us the history." "Tell about Jeff Higgs." "Tell us, tell us." How was he to let them down? Bleat stepped a distance apart and made a face for them, striking a grandiose pose, and gave them the declamation that by now they knew almost as well as the joker.

"*Jefferson Kemp Higgs,*" he started to declaim the history,

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"*one of Emmanuel's early sons—*" No sooner were the first words off his tongue than they were a silent audience stifling the merriment he'd provoked only by making the face. Each time he started they took it for granted their clown would be funnier than ever. To see him puff his cheeks and sniff through his big haughty nose was enough to send one or two of the fainter-minded into premature convulsions, dropping their books on the floor.

In the library once, while hunting for some reference book, Bleat had come upon an obscure shelf marked "Publications by Graduates," and tucked away among other unsuspected lucubrations on yachting, rock gardening, dog obedience, contract bridge, was a little volume (privately printed) entitled *Emmanuel Academy—A History*. The author, Torbert Case, '96, was a past president of the Alumni Society and the same rhapsodic alumnus who had written some remarkable fund-raising brochures. Mostly Mr. Case's volume described the Academy's origins and the dour, supralapsarian career of the Scottish clergyman Josiah Birch who was its founder; but near the end was an account, possibly the only one extant, of the Higgs Memorial Chapel. Bleat had committed this to memory.

"*Jefferson Kemp Higgs, one of Emmanuel's early sons, belonged to that proud and public-spirited bank of financiers who, ill content to rest idle while the nation's honor was outraged by the bestial treatment of our defenceless neighbors in Cuba by a foreign despot, raised in concert their influential voices which finally impressed upon the Pontian conscience of President McKinley that it was our duty to extirpate, once and for all time, the decadent Spaniard from our Hemisphere!*"

"Hooray," they chorused for him. "Hooray for our Hemisphere!"

"*On the eighteenth of February, 1898, the USS Maine was treacherously sunk, and what followed, as every Emmanueler knows, is a new chapter of our American History!*"

"You tell us Bleatster!"

"*Jefferson Higgs, most understandably, took a fatherly interest in the infant republic and himself acquired lands in Cuba which were planted to sugar cane!*" Bleat had got it down so that he could

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take in a breath and declaim a paragraph of Mr. Case in a single exhalation. He could rock back on his heels and expell the prose from his lungs. "*On returning from Havana in 1901 Jefferson Higgs fell ill. At 'Satisfaction,' his summer 'chateau' on the rock-bound coast of Bar Harbour, Jefferson Higgs died, unfortunately, of amoebic dysentery, caught while eating shellfish in the land he had—fate's pawn—befriended. A loss mourned not only by his Emmanuel brothers but by his country as well...* How do you like that?" He'd perfected, as well, the knack of shutting it off, of collapsing the entire pose when he chose to interject opinions of his own. "Here's this fat cat millionaire who helps start up a stupid war. Then they go build the son of a bitch a *chapel!*"

When he allowed his resentment to flare too high, he dismayed his audience. Only mention "millionaire" and their faces warned: *that's meatball talk.* Millionaire was a thorny word in their ears, a sensitive abstraction, New Deal stuff, like socialistic talk about the Great Unwashed, meatball talk. It could actually be an insult to somebody's father.

"Okay, you don't agree." Bleat read their faces. This year he was cultivating a rude gift for irony. "They build a chapel that's supposed to be to the greater glory of God. Then they go dedicate it to this fat cat millionaire-politician war-starter. Okay, so you don't mind that? I do. I think it stinks."

Somebody said, "You're talking like a meatball."

In a cold pause he stared the critic down. The boy withdrew and another and another, while Bleat kept silent and waited to win his game of cat and mouse. When his audience had almost dissipated itself, he had only to clap his hands and they ran back laughing.

"*Consider!*" he declaimed. "*Consider the Higgs Memorial Chapel as it stands today!*"

He made the face, he struck the pose. Through the window he pointed an indignant finger at the offensive steeple and that was that. He had them like trained seals. He relished the clown's power but a contempt came with it, for their letting it be so easy. "Tell us about the chapel." "Tell us about the aglopogic blooms!"

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Tell us. He never let them down.

"*Consider the Higgs Memorial Chapel, as it stands today, in its classical, yet not pretentious contours, a form majestic as it is modest, which might be described by the classicist's phrase, 'multum in parvo!'* " he brandished his arms to the rhythms of Torbert Case, '96. "*Its colored glass and mullionwork, both, are equally 'first rate,' while travelers have compared its stone buttresses to the 'very best' Gothic of Cologne and Chartres, while he is a rare visitor who fails to agree that its steeple, reaching Godwards in a matutinal sky, is one of the most majestic in Western Massachusetts!*

"*Noteworthy too are the ivies and bosky shrubs which embrace and enhance the chapel walls. These are the pride of Grounds Superintendent Stanislaus Kloczec and his staff of good gardeners. It is no small tribute to 'Stan' that the proudly apogeotropic blooms of his laurel bushes have won more than one award from the Springfield County Chapter of the Garden Club of America, a botanical paean by which the memory of Jefferson Kemp Higgs is, truly, 'done proud.'*"

"Yay Jeff Higgs!"

"Here's looking up your old apogologopical bloom!"

Gradually, to see his audience teary-eyed and applauding, dropping their books all over the place, he came to be embarrassed by them. He wearied of the Jefferson Higgs thing and soon he stopped doing it. That was four years ago and the stunt was forgotten now among all the other stunts he had done for them since.

6

This evening the Hero Fool slouched toward Evening Prayer bowed down with his sins. Passing into the shadow of the Higgs Memorial Chapel made him shudder.

Be a man, Dr. Kew said. *Manful*...Keep faith with thy God. Honor thy father and thy mother. Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

It's telling lies to be honest—that's all. I will kneel down in there and I'm going to lie. Does that bring forgiveness? I slugged my mother and I wished she was dead.

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Up in the steeple the cast-iron bell banged the harder the closer he came. He was near enough to see the memorial plaque and the fat cross with the bird turds that one time, oh funny, he called the Guano Memorial Plaque. The steeple bell stopped and from the inside came the noise of Mr. Tryle, Organist-Choirmaster, blasting away on the hundred-thousand-dollar memorial organ.

Listen to the man take something fantastic by Haydn and turn it into so much loud wind and honking you can't stand it. The most tremendous music and he rooks it. Keep faith with thy God all the same.

Bleat reached the chapel steps in a drove of schoolmates, and here he carefully fell behind. They went up the steps tucking shirttails in, cramming tennis balls in jacket pockets, chattering till they reached the open doors on top. "Shh—quiet." They walked into the dark. Bleat stopped on the bottom step, afraid to follow. They'd had a dry spring. The air was warm and clear, not a cloud in the May sky. On the chapel wall the ivy looked crisp and the lawns were unseasonably brown. It was a fact that the celebrated laurel bushes were late with their apogeotropic bloom, as Grounds Superintendent Kloczec was only too aware. Every evening as soon as the sun had sunk behind the chapel Stan Kloczec would rush to its eastern side a battery of hoses and lawnsprinklers. Pinwheels of water hissed and splattered over the parched turf and garden beds, wetting down the fertilizers of bone meal and cow manure. A mizzle of spray hung in the air and sometimes, past the shadow line of the steeple, miniature rainbows were formed by the sun. Squinting, Bleat tried to find a rainbow in the vapor. Stan Kloczec blocked his view: the Academy's ageless Pole, ruthlessly supervising a couple of his grandsons.

The young Kloczecs stood more than six feet tall, yet they hadn't the brawn of their progenitor, who was built low to the ground and like the bell in the steeple, dense and cumbrous. Stan's face was swarthy, theirs milky and soft. The first one spaded manure out of the wheelbarrow and the other tamped the fertilizer around the bush roots, while the grandfather gave them orders in a basso old-country dialect. No

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one talked back to Stan; the trees themselves, the grasses, the shrubs, owed him obeisance and it was among the Grounds Superintendent's prerogatives to choose his groundkeeping staff from the line of his Polish-American descendants. Bleat saw him as one of Millet's peasants, an insuperable grubber in the earth, hectoring his two weakling epigones who couldn't do anything right. Old Kloczec scowled. A bumblebee settled on the brim of his baseball umpire's cap. That cap: it was as if he were never without the grimy black thing resting high on the crown of his cueball head, so no one could say for sure that Stan was totally bald. Stan took the bee and carefully squeezed its life out between his splayed fingers that had been smashed in fuseboxes, gears, buzzsaws, and had survived like gardenhose.

There was a lull in the organ music and Bleat heard the grandsons singing at their work. They sang no old Polish folksong, but a Your Lucky Strike Hit Parade selection, "Three little fishies in a itty bitty poo and they thwam and they thwam wight ovah the dam." Two voices rose in chorus, "Dink boom sittum down in wattum-*choo!*" It vexed the old man, he broke into English: "Sdupid, you do that noise beside *church*! You some sdupid—" He had a grandson by the collar and was boxing his ears in the old country fashion. Fighting free, the grandson tripped over the hose and upset the sprinkler. The device lay on its side, half its rotating arms caught in the sod so that the water pressure was increased through its unhampered openings. It struggled throbbing in the grass like a weird marine creature, squirting to considerable heights the water which fell in lashes to the ground. One of these convulsions splattered from shoulders to skirts the vestments of Dr. Kew, just as he was entering the vestry door on the side of the chapel.

"Sdupid, whadmadda wi you?" Stan Kloczec, mortified, excoriated his grandson.

The Headmaster stepped nimbly through the door, then he thought to ease the Kloczecs' pain with a quip: "Well now, I expect *that* is as close as we Episcos come to total immersion!" Chuckling, he was about to shut the vestry door, when he saw

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the boy. "You're coming in, Steve?" Dr. Kew called. "You're not forgetting your promise?" Once again the organ was blasting away and he had to raise his voice, though not harshly: he hated to see a tormented face—and on a boy.

"Nosir." Bleat shook his head. He ran up the chapel steps as the organ reached a climactic blast and was the last one in.

The chapel's transept, the oaken choirstalls and the pews, and all the white faces which filled them, were romantically dappled in colored sunbeams falling through the stained Italianate windows. There were candles on the altar, and lights the shape of candles burning yellow on the stone walls, and a bronze lamp hung by a long chain from the ceiling of the nave. The interior was warm and dry from the spring weather. Throughout the basilica the atmosphere varied with the season like the hayloft of an old wood barn.

Frankincense and myrrh. Who could say what the words meant exactly? Different smelling kinds of stuff they used to burn in churches or old Pharaohs' tombs. If you ever got deep inside a tomb of the Pharaohs, you'd probably smell all kinds of smells in there. Like a regular Chinese restaurant. Smells so stocky that if they got way up your nose it was hell to get them out. These ideas came to him literally by way of his nose, when in the first moments of kneeling in his pew in the true schoolboy ritual—an arm draped on back of the pew ahead and eyes buried in the elbow's blue-flannel crook—he essayed a rapid prayer, a casual salutation of his God; but it was hard to keep his mind on it when he was so conscious of his classmates squeezed in on him right and left, their salutations done, and wondering what was taking him so long with his. He realized through his nostrils tilted down that his neighbor's sneakers were awfully smelly.

"Jesus, Goodwiller," he whispered. "Peeyewee. You can't wear sneakers in chapel."

"Shhh."

"What a stink, Goodwiller."

"Quiet, you whack."

"Wear sneakers in chapel."

"Shhh. Quiet."

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They whispered in the terminal hush before the Head Man entered from the vestry and took his place before the altar.

"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness... let the whole earth stand in awe of Him." Dr. Kew's voice rose fantastic from the nave.

The pews and the prayer stools creaked and scraped under the thumping of about seven hundred knees when Student Body knelt down simultaneously with Faculty and Faculty Wives. Their various voices, the girlish high, the faltering, the virile profundo, were joined in the common susurruss of the Confession:

"...We have offended against thy holy laws.

"We have left undone those things which we ought to have done. And we have done those things which we ought not to have done.

"And there is no health in us."

No words wrung him like these. First, a flash of horror struck him down to his old perdition and back near to the doomsday suffocation of before. Strange and fast as it had come, the horror receded and released him, so he was aware of himself as himself once again and kneeling in the accepted pose, eyes pressed behind the elbow of his flannel First Classman's blazer. It was impossible to seek the Lord without appearing to do so. Still all his self-consciousness could not quite stifle his rejoicing. *(I know that my redeemer liveth.)* His obedient lips moved in the incantation that made the chapel rumble with Student Body and Faculty and Wives beseeching the most meaningful Father to restore the penitent that hereafter they might live a godly, righteous, and sober life. The Confession drew him down in the mighty oceans with Noah and when it finished his spirit burst up rejoicing on the sunny beaches. Amen. Bleat unblinded his eyes and propped his chin on the ridge of the forward pew, where he could look over the crook of his arm and contemplate the minister.

"The almighty and merciful Lord grant you absolution and remission of all your sins..." The daytime Dr. Kew, the classroom Christian, was incapable of this. In the evening he had on his robes and appeared here where his very presence

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was transformed by the chanted glories which arose from him, a draped figure part-hidden in a stall several paces from the altar. Bleat strained his eyes to be sure it truly was the same Head Man.

"LET US PRAY."

At once the stones and timbers reverberated under the Lord's Prayer. The acoustics were so comforting that Bleat forgot to pray, and only listened to the blessed roll and soughing of those words, which took effect on him in a new rush of sentiment for his comrades he saw now, heads buried in their arms, as he looked over the sleeve of his blazer. They too had on, a good many of them, their blue blazers that were the emblems of their station, worn with pride; stitched to the breast pockets just over their hearts the E and the green and white crest of Emmanuel which none but athletes might wear. A glimpse of his own blazer—a coagulum of egg yoke on the sleeve, left from a recent breakfast—gave him satisfaction. He wore the blazer and the E because he indeed was coxswain on the first Emmanuel crews. It had taken five years; going out shivering on the lake each year when the crocus bloomed and the tree buds were barely formed, he coxed and learned the high-minded sport of rowing: from the cumbrous beginners' barge and the intermediate wherries until, this spring at last, he coxed the swift black Pocock shells that were the Academy's pride, worth thousands of alumni dollars. He learned to take a racing shell over bending streams and wind-chopped reservoirs, and risk impalement, in early March for instance, on a chunk of unmelted ice—a peril which Mr. Claud by quaint conceit (a Homeric soul dies hard) would name Aeolia's Floating Isle. A submerged elm at the dam end of the lake was Scylla, and Charybdis a shelf of limestone jutting out from the old quarry. Mr. Claud's oarsmen were the valorous Achaeans. And Mr. Claud would be their Agamemnon, the imperious Classics Master even before he was the stoic Coach of Crew, a disconsolate ex-English hero who in a distant time had rowed at Henley, a scholar-soldier of the Georgian stripe, who had a ferocious nose, limped romantically for having lost four toes at Gallipoli, played the oboe, mourned the an-

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cient verities, made his creased bleak face a battlefield of perpetual disappointment. And Bleat perforce revered him. As though their two strange natures and two ferocious noses formed a bond, Mr. Claud had broken precedent and made Bleat all but openly his pet. On seeing his runt of a cox, one hundred twelve pounds of guile hectoring a crew of blistered muscle-bulging drudges, the coach's face had now and then smiled. Wily Odysseus, Mr. Claud had said. Odysseus sacker of cities. Resourceful Odysseus, stalwart Odysseus. Out on the lake, snug in the helm of a Pocock, in a seat of illimitable power, he faced down his oarsmen. *Chock chock, chock-a-chock;* he hit the wooden grips of the steering guys against the brass-plated gunnels and beat out the stroke for them, and "*in out,* hin-hout," he yelled at them too. "You're late number six!... I want to move this boat... move it," he yelled in the little megaphone strapped to his head. Anything he told them to do they did, like apes or galley slaves; for six afternoons out of seven now as the spring grew greener he was their commander. "Hin-hout," he yelled in his megaphone and the shell shot forward. A pretty sight to see them bending to their oars and cleaving the wine-dark waters.

"O Lord, open thou our lips."

The congregation rose up for the *Gloria Patri*, then settled down in a creaking of pews. Dr. Kew read the lesson from the Gospel according to St. John and gave it his hieratic all, as though the verses were still in Latin. Bleat took to scratching the egg yolk off his sleeve, and fell back into his nostalgias. A refrain golden, clear and slender as a cornet call strengthened this sweet mood: a song like the evening sunbeams came from the choir stalls where a lonely mouth, one of the little first sopranos, sang, "LORD now let-test THOU thy serVANT depart in peace—*deepaht een pea-ees-ss*—ac-CORD-ing to thy word."

Bleat smiled into the sweet sound; the *Nunc Dimittis* was a sealing off in distant, mindlost pleasures, and the spell of it lasted him through the austerities of the creed and collects. The hymn this evening was "Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve"—a rouser, but even so, and all blanketed in lusty

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voices, he didn't listen. The service ended very fast. He must not have heard Dr. Kew pronounce the last amen. Everybody was going; they were ploughing over his legs, crowding past him in their haste to leave the pew. "Hey, take it easy, Goodwiller."

The chapel doors were thrown wide, the organ boomed and blasted, the debouchment was underway, in groups of Wives preceding Faculty preceding Student Body, one after the other following down the stone aisles and out of doors. Bleat with his dreamer's smile sat and watched them go. He slid his languid weight to the outer edge and corner of the empty pew and sat limp, hands crossed on his lap, soundless, gone past so much as breathing, in a state of suspended animation. He might have been invisible or at least transparent, because the Chapel Boy didn't see him.

The Chapel Boy had an ectoplasmic quality: a timid lad several years Bleat's junior, named Payler, T., pale and stark as bone, who went about his sexton's chores, putting hymnals and prayer stools in place, and polishing the altar, tending the candles, scraping drippings from the altar, putting God's house to bed all in a form of devout regret, even as if, much against his will, Payler, T., had the bounden duty every day and twice the Sabbath to put to bed God. And the boy scarcely made a noise in his work, only occasionally the rebel sneeze —Yahker-*chew*—of one who is congenitally mortified by hay fever. Yahker-*chew*. The sneezes caromed off the stones and vaults and poor Payler, T., would cringe. Scared of his own sneezes! Bleat felt an affectionate contempt. Well what do you expect? He's Chapel Boy.

The job was a reward for piety. The Headmaster awarded it each year to a new communicant.

Yahker-*chew*. Payler, T., was at the organ, dusting off the keyboard, and probably it was the impetus of his sneezing that released one of the stops. There was a sudden squawk, a belch of wind from the pipes, and the sounds must have unnerved Payler, T., who hurried down the aisle. The lights went off in the transept; a scuffle of shoeleather on the steps and the big doors clapped shut. Bleat was enclosed in the Jeffer-

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son Kemp Higgs chapel.

I slugged my mother when I wished she was dead, he remembered very slowly. Red headlines in the middle of the air: Boy's Blow Breaks Mother's Heart, Berserk Mom Died. She daid.

He recited the Lord's Prayer and listened to it echo back phrase by phrase, anything to keep back his fear. He sang, "Lord, now lettest thou thy ser-vant dee-paht een pea-ace." He sang a clear Amen up to the darkened windows, but when the echo died, his misery was greater. He felt start the same imaginary chest pain he had when he hit her yesterday.

Now I am scared, he said, and fell to his knees...We have done those things which we ought not to have done and there is no health in us...Once more with his head in the crook of his arm and blinding himself in the blue flannel, he waited for divine forgiveness. When it came he would know it at once, he was quite sure: first a vibration of the scalp and down his spine a joyous current and he would be purged in the spirit and the flesh as when Bishop Walsh's hand lay upon his head. Nothing happened except his shivers got worse and he turned hot and cold...Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep...All he felt was the systole and diastole of his fright mounting on each breath, and he wondered if he were going to die there. But nothing happened. So he got up and left the pew.

Going down quickly in the shadows and the dusty smells, he got to the main aisle where he nearly bolted for the door. When he saw the altar, though, and the cove of electric light falling across it from the ceiling, and saw the burnished porphyry, the cloth of linen, the cross of bronze, the candelabra, the white candles the Chapel Boy had lovingly snuffed out, and, lastly, when rising in back (backing the full tableau of holies which Payler, T., was warder of) the tall altarpiece confronted him, Bleat stood still. The last was a painting in triptych form richly gilt and ostentatious, imported from Italy by Jefferson Kemp Higgs' classmates; he knew this fact because Dr. Kew once emphasized to him the left panel, which showed his name saint being stoned in a fairly shameless imitation

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of Fra Angelico's style. Strangely, it was not the stoning of Stephen but the big center panel that lured him toward the altar. The light fell full on this panel and made its bright areas shine with a special radiance out of the growing night. From the top a cluster of white angel-heralds hung, their trumpets aimed down at a band of panoplied knights on snowy mounts which in turn were suspended over the head of an elongated man in black robes and whose pale hand was up in benediction. Who they all were, what exactly they were doing, he'd never asked; he made for them on slowly dragging feet and not once took his eyes off them but followed his own eyes. The vaguely Byzantine figure in the black robe of course made him think of Bishop Walsh when he hovered over his head in swirling raiment, chanting, "Defend, O Lord, this thy child..." About ten feet from the altar he reached the wooden rail and tried to find the exact spot he'd bowed before the bishop. At the altar rail he fell on his knees, this time banging them quite painfully on the stones, so impatient he was to relearn and recover mysteries.

He was praying harder than he knew. He held his back rigid and knelt now erect from the waist in the most militant supplication. Shoulders back, chest out, neck and head strained upward, his body was a lightning rod to catch the sweet flashes from on high...God and Father, I have done things I ought not to have done and there is no health in us or me. Excuse me... He prayed open-eyed, boring in his elbows on the railing, keeping stiff his arms and wrists and fingertips to the point of his chin like Dr. Kew...Excuse me Lord; the Lord forgive the thing I did—Father forgive me. Bishop Walsh forgive me. Give me peace... His knees on the stone floor were sore, so were his elbows on the rail, the tendons of his hands were starting to ache; the rigors of kneeling disturbed his prayer. It seemed in the shadows that faces were mocking him. He was as craven and dishonored as the meanest of his Puritan forefathers ever to have been put on the pillory. An ancestor of his, some one of those grisly Pilgrims and Huguenots, must have known the chagrin of being collared and manacled to the post: the town booby. His eyes devised a different

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triptych wherein the man in black robes was not Bishop Walsh any more but this penitent ancestor whose glowing white head and hands stuck through the holes of the pillory. The right arm stuck out all the way from the shoulder, enabling the hand to salute him.

"*No*—" He shook his head furiously, he forced himself to pray aloud. "Our father—" but he heard a high sniggering burst from his throat; an ugly shrill little hee-hee-hee laugh which he confessed to be a quirk of his blood. It sounded as bad, as mean, as his brother at home laughing on a Sunday morning, when little Buddy stood in the kitchen saying dirty limericks to Aunt Norah's aggrieved, nun-pure, hairpin-spewing biddies coming back from Mass. "God forgive me," he muttered and waited, but there was no comfort, no peace; he braced his body on the altar rail. This time he covered his eyes with his hands and sealed off the outer distractions and apparitions, tight inside his hands, where the black was thick as cat's fur. Loathing what he had done, dreading what he might become, he drove knuckles and fingerbones into the bone of his forehead even as if trying to hold his cranium intact... There is no health, no help in us. Lord, where is this health? Is it You?... Oppressive, ever answerless, his question perished in the blackness where he discerned here and there a patch or whorl or lesser blackness where, conceivably, a match had flickered once in the eitons and alautons of time before the Creation and the Flood. By pushing, he soon discovered, the heels of his thumbs against his eyes he could explode the black and induce sensations of being inside a furnace of cold orange fire terrible enough to turn the soul to stone. When he relaxed the pressure on his eyes, all subsided into blackness. Several such extrasensory leaps and he was beside himself with terror...log dog bog she daid begon mom no nodog. In his final silent gibbering he struggled, although by now his thoughts had marched down to the ends of the earth.

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Mark him well as he leaves off praying for good. In one athletic surge he rises and hurdles the altar rail. The nave is lighted from above, so that the same cones of light that fall over the altar, whitening the faces painted on the triptych, catch his skin too. Everywhere but here the chapel is dark; the stained Italian windows have turned so black you can't tell them from the stone walls. Not a shadow remains; only the dark, cavernous as the great fish's belly where Jonah went to repine; but out of it in this gymnastic instant Bleat leaps into the light.

He lands hard, his shoe heels smacking on the stones. So unaccountable a feat surprises him perhaps. (He could have reached the altar by walking through the opening in the rail, like anybody else.) As he lands crouched, he freezes, knees bent and arms out. You might suppose from this posture that the boy is going to leap again or kneel again, while in fact he is merely contemplating the triptych from close up. His eyes rotate between the two panels whence both his martyred saint and his phantasmal black-gowned Pilgrim ancestor lower down at him. From their spectral gaze he draws a sort of deicidal energy—or apparently so, for now he laughs and smartly claps his hands, driving echoes through the chapel. As if an uproarious joke were detonated between him and the gods beyond, he laughs and claps, laughs and claps until the ribald mood has passed and then his nerves fail. Just the scuff of shoeleather, the glimpse of his white face contorted in the light, the whirl of flannel shoulders before he escapes in the dark. He bolts up the aisle, his fingers slapping on the pew-tops to guide him. High and low the vaults and stones echo back the clatter of his shoes, the slamming of his body against the doors. A fierce claustrophobia would seem to drive him, since he batters the iron doors with his mighty-atom weight for some bruising moments until he remembers to turn the handle.

Outside, drawing in deep breaths, he steals down the chapel steps under the black sky and deep night. He lifts his head to

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sniff the night air. At the same time he rubs the shoulder that hurts him and he touches his fingers to the lump that's rising on his forehead.

The night is by far more pungent than sticky smells of frankincense and myrrh. He is already down the steps and stealing away from the chapel. The moon is up; it is like a cake of white soap and gives him a hard light to move through like a rodent, furtively. He sniffs the air, testing it for gases. Now he halts and he lifts his eyes to the firmament. He looks up and he sees the stars, poisoned stars. On this balmy night the heavens envelop him in an arctic black, as if he were still praying with his hands on his eyes, and the white nebulae, the frozen suns and firmaments disdain him. Maybe it is to rebuke them, make them hear his wrath, that he cracks his hands together. The noise is nothing to what he could make inside the chapel; no echoes from the vaults of sky, but a moment's crepitating of hands, a small impertinence that faints into stillness and the chirping of tree toads in the hemlocks along the lake a mile off. Close by he hears the hiss and splatter of lawnsprinklers on the grass.

He steps from the gravel onto the slippery lawn. Step by step as he moves, the varied odors of the night congeal to a single smell whose source is in the bushes. He feels an icy lick across his cheek, and another. The water hisses in his ear. The lawnsprinklers, their cold whirligigs shooting through the moonbeams, intrigue him so that he nearly forgets he's in their range and he ducks ineptly, trips on the hose, and lands all fours on the soggy greensward. A loop of hose has snared his foot; no sooner he gets up than it brings him down. Laughing, talking to himself, trouser knees and blazer sleeves soaked through, Bleat sits at the edge of the laurel bed, where the manure smells the rankest, and tries to disengage his foot.

There is a coating of manure on the hose, some of it wipes off on his fingers and he moans, "Aw, come on!" When he is on his feet he finds the water has soaked through his trouser seat. Half hidden by a laurel bush the wheelbarrow rests with a mound of cow manure into which is plunged a spade. No escaping its reek; Bleat's nostrils take him to the wheelbarrow

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whose moist contents in the moonlight take on a phosphorescent patina, a glow which to his intense eyes suggests the triptych standing in there on the altar. The moistly shining laurel blooms and rhododendron clusters scratching his cheek, he breaks off two or three and pokes the stems in the manure to garnish the load. The effect would seem to provoke him, for he is able to laugh once more and smack his hands together. *Crack-crack.* One reprise of fury, a final spurt of adrenalin is enough to break the last of the Episcopalian sanctions laid upon his soul.

Bleat hauls the wheelbarrow out of the shrubbery and onto the gravel path. He finds the cart compact in his grasp, solid and powerful; and himself exultantly in control of something warlike, he pretends, a battering ram or a tank. A Nazi panzer tank, he thinks, like in the newsreels. "Wah-ROOM," he makes it a tank with sound effects, and the garden spade sticking out like a machine gun. "A-tat-tat-tat-tat, bah-ROOM." Between these soul-destroying sounds and his laughing the night is not so still. The axle creaks when he pivots the wheelbarrow on the gravel and aims it at the chapel. The loose wooden sides are rattling. Two or three strong steps to get momentum and he is borne on behind the heavy load so inexorably that he almost crashes it into the chapel steps. Again he pivots and starts to haul the wheel backward, the metal rim scraping the brownstone as it mounts. This would be hard going by daylight, but here, where the steeple blocks off the stars, there is no knowing how he will manage to feel his way. Will the panic come? A bad moment when the spade falls out and clanks on the paving, but he retrieves and plunges it back in the load. And his courage holds; he makes it to the top of the steps.

The school has gone to bed. He can see the yellow night bulbs burning in the long linoleum corridors that echoed with his name. Bleat, they shouted. Bad boy. Funny boy. Bleat. Now he only hears the lawnsprinklers hissing and the clee-peep song of tree toads near the lake. Bad boy, funny boy; he pauses to rest the load and test his courage, and from the summit of the chapel steps looks down in castigation at the

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blackened windows of the classrooms and dormitories where The French Shin Fight happened, where Bleat won his name.

He jerks the wheelbarrow. The axle creaks again as he turns the load around and heads it through the wide flung door at the chapel's mouth. His actions are well past the most ludicrous extreme, and still his nerves hold strong when the transept receives him into its maw.

Dimly seen by the lamp which hangs from the nave are the white candles Payler, T., blew out, and the white faces on the triptych. They are throwing stones at Stephen and the Pilgrim forebear is crouching in the stock. The floorstones rumble under the wheelbarrow. Bleat blunders down the aisle behind the load, pulled on after the frantic stench and weight of it, and hard down to the shimmering altar. Holy of holies. He gets there, sets down the cart, takes the spade, and he falls to his work with a will.

"*Whadmadda wi you, sdupid?*"

The question bursts directly in back of him, rising from the floorstones and caroming through the vaults and timbers of the ceiling. Not a voice, it seemed, but a noise, some infernal foghorn able to articulate words. Bleat heard it as though it came out of a tube, a winding long-clogged drain set into the floor and descending downwards through layers of ooze and algae to a chthonian larynx.

"Whadyou do wi my wheebarra, sdupid?" demanded Grounds Superintendent Kloczec.

"What does it look like I'm doing with it?" Bleat's response was spontaneous, mindless, and his gaze upon the altar. Between this and the wheelbarrow he made his stand, tossing on another spadeful of the stuff. He checked his arms and for an instant frowned at the spade, as if he'd quite forgotten that the thing was in his hands.

"You some fresh kid!" The words came from behind him in a hot breath, wafting into the heady night blends of garlic and perspiration. "Whadyou do make big shidpile insita *church?*"

Bleat turned and confronted inches from his nose a prognathic jaw, a broad Polish face above a barrel body. The honest gardener had on his head a baseball umpire's cap.

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Bleat's hands were trembling, he could scarcely speak and he had at any cost to contrive the gay façade. He set the spade back carefully in the wheelbarrow, and sought some new diversion, one more stall for time. "Hey Stan, where's the ball game? Hey, don't you know better than wear a hat in church?"

There came a glottal burst of Polish, and Bleat saw stars and yelled in pain. For a while the Grounds Superintendent was boxing his ears.

"You come. You and me go talk to Hetmasda!" And it ended there, with the Grounds Superintendent leading him by the scruff of his blazer, away to a fool's doom.

8

Late the next morning, alone in the white, sun-drenched infirmary, he emerged from sedation. The school physician noted contusions of the right upper humerus and clavicle, left and right tibiae, and the left kneecap. The patient complained that he still smelled "an awful smell everywhere." The doctor ordered x-rays of the head that had battered against the chapel door, and from these he diagnosed a concussion from a trauma sustained in the ethmoid region of the skull, with concomitant pressure upon the olfactory nerve. This opinion was to receive due attention. *A trauma to the olfactory nerve.* It was a physiological fact: so much for the addled nostrils that could not tell cow manure from "frankincense and myrrh," and so much for the less than ingenious attempt at exculpation ("I just went crazy, sir.") which met with some mild chuckling when the Headmaster quoted it at Faculty Meeting only that night.

Two nights and a day young Apollyon lay in bed, heavy lidded from the injections which Mrs. Glappis, the Registered Nurse, kept sticking in his buttocks. She was a chubby, turkey-complected woman with a seraph's disposition. Certain favored boys could without qualm and to her face call her by the faintly insidious nickname of Mother Glap. This was the

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gently billowing nurse who through the years had given him enemas and nasal sprays, cared for his chicken pox and pink eye, who had laughed with him at a hundred jokes. There was no question in his mind that she was on his side no matter what, and he loved her for such innocence of spirit and simplicity of mind. "Good Mother Glap." He lolled and babbled in the bedsheets, seeing her come at him again bearing the napkin-covered tray on which the hypodermic needle glistened like a scepter. His bed was beside an east window and as Nurse Glappis approached in the sunshine, the crisp starched little hospital cap on her snowy head reflected an aureole of mercy so powerful that he seemed to bask in it. "Good Mother Glap," he laughed. "Are you going to stick me with more truth serum?"

Nurse Glappis failed to laugh, failed to crack a smile, but put the tray on the bed table with a ghostly chill and a whiff of denatured alcohol. "You've played your last joke," was all she said. "On to your stomach now and down with those pajamas." He felt the goose pimples go up his back and then her icicle fingers upon his skin and the cold swab of rubbing alcohol, but coldest of all the needle.

Nobody else would talk to him either, not his fellow patients in the ward, not the charwoman swabbing down the floor with germicides. As he lay in this state of hebetude and the hypodermics wore off and the pressure lifted from his olfactory nerve, eventually he understood that he was getting the silent treatment. On the Headmaster's orders.

"Apollyonism"—this word the Headmaster chose. A word worthy of Cardinal Newman; and taken to mean that Beelzebub had entered into Blodgette and bound over the boy's spirit to a black ordinance—made him indeed "a brother to dragons and a companion to owls."

"When he looked for good, then evil came unto him; when he waited for light, there came darkness." What other explanation was there? Was there an alternative to expulsion?

"There is no alternative," Dr. Kew answered himself.

"Nosir."

"You have made me sick at heart."

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"Yesir."

The Head Man stood at the foot of Bleat's bed wearing in this parting moment an aspect very different from his usual. The Spencer Tracy in him, the bluff two-fisted Christian, had given way to the heathen Rhadamanthus who spoke his judgment in thunder. "To expell you is the severest punishment we can give. In your case—you were soon to graduate from this school and I can't believe it was your own will that determined your actions—this punishment may seem cruel. I can't do more in the temporal sphere for this sick soul of yours than banish it from the scene of... its collapse. It is not for me to grant the remission you will require so desperately. You must find it for yourself... and the Lord will help you."

"Will he though, will he? I don't mean to be fresh, sir." Bleat faltered. In the hypodermic's desperate aftermath, everything he said was wrong.

"It is not for me to divine His ways," said Dr. Kew. "But I'll venture to say that without Him...lacking His grace... your evil will smite hard for the rest of your days."

"Yesir."

"And you will fear for your immortal soul."

"Yesir," he only said, and from then on he did as he was told. No time for his trunk; they would pack it and send it in due course. He turned in his books, drew seven dollars travel allowance, packed his suitcase, shut himself in his room. His release from the infirmary had been timed for the lunch hour when he would have no contact with his schoolmates gathered in the dining hall downstairs. He heard the clatter of crockery and the rumor of voices through the floor, as he sat on his bed and waited for Mr. Claud, the master Dr. Kew had thoughtfully assigned to take him home. At the sound of footsteps in the corridor, Bleat hurried to the door with his suitcase.

"Payler," he said, "I'm sorry about that."

It was merely Payler, T., the melancholy Chapel Boy. "I had to see you. I skipped lunch," he told Bleat in an angry whisper, a wild face. "If they catch me talking to you, I could get booted out too, don't forget." It was a martyr's warning,

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intended to rub in this extra salt of shame. "Why did you do it? I don't see how anybody could do a thing that dirty." Tears welled in Payler's eyes; he dabbed at them with a blue woolen necktie. "You should have seen what it looked like in the daytime."

"I said I was sorry. I didn't do it against you personally, Payler."

"It took a whole day to clean up. Nobody ever did a thing so dirty, I bet—not in the whole history of Church!"

"Thanks for the kind words, Payler, boy." Bleat would have liked to shrug them off, but they were the last spoken to him at Emmanuel and quite impossible to forget.

During the slow excruciating train ride to New York he tried to talk to Mr. Claud. Mr. Claud, the doleful classicist and Coach of Crew, had been his favorite hero after all, without whose guidance he could not have won the white E on the brave green shield on the breast of his blue blazer; all of that polluted now, ruined, finished, never to be worn again. Bleat asked him, "Sir, will it blow over do you think?"

The ferocious-nosed ex-English hero gazed at the floor of the day coach, his huge oarsman's hands clutched round the knee of the leg of the foot that was wounded at Gallipoli, and said what he could to solace his lost coxswain who sat on the seat beside him: "It may seem cold comfort to you now, but I suggest that in twenty years practically everyone will have forgot." Because almost that many years ago, shortly after the Great War, when Mr. Claud first came to this country, the Rector Peabody had given him a position as a teacher of Greek at Groton School. An unutterably malicious desecration was done to the Groton Chapel, a calculated affront to the Rector —"an outside job," as they say, that had been carefully planned by a group of brummagem young Harvard students who must have borne an inexplicably cruel grudge against their old school, Groton. Ah, the scandal was furious and the social opprobrium so great that one of the young men had offered to release his fiancée from their engagement. "A shocking affair." Mr. Claud gave something like a reminiscent sigh. "Yet hardly anybody remembers it." A sigh again. "Certain of the de-

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tails—which assuredly I shall not dwell upon—were similar to what you were possessed to do to the Higgs Chapel. Pity. I needn't say how distressed I am. Pity. Dreadful to have happened to one's cox!"

Through these Anglicisms, under the play-up and play-the-game pitch of the British accent, Bleat heard a note of compassion. He didn't really trust it, because in his next breath the classicist got archly Homeric and pontifical. "Pity that the gods chose to conspire against you," Mr. Claud said and he quoted a self-conscious line: "Those whom the gods seek to destroy they first make—" he observed a heavy caesura—"Steven Blodgette."

Mr. Claud's bon mot stayed with Bleat, saying itself over in his mind for the entire train ride. When he got to his great aunt's house at Eighty-second Street and touched his finger to the doorbell, he was still listening to it.

Then it was inevitably his mother in a dun-colored negligee who opened the door, huddling and peeking from behind it, to avoid being seen from the street. Awkwardly enough her first glimpse was of Mr. Claud, a strange man standing right there on the doorstep, and she recoiled from him as if from a rapist. As soon as she saw her son, she burst into tears.

"Oh Steven," his mother cried. "Are you all right, darling?"

That was the end of his formal education.

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James Schuyler

"Earth's Holocaust"

It's time again.
Tear up the violets
and plant something more difficult to grow.
Everything a little cleaner, a little more ugly:
cast cement tubs of malevolent ageratums,
and: "Your grandmother baked
and froze that pie. We saved it
for a special occasion." Codicils
don't add up to much when there's nothing to leave:
a bedroom, stretching from Portland
to Richmond stunningly furnished in
French motel provincial. On the brighter side
plastic seaweed has proved
an unqualified success. As have ready-glued scrapbooks
which if out of style
still epitomize. In this one
is your first matchbook cover,
an advertisement with a misprint,
a pair of bronze baby shoes,
a tinted enlargement of a tintype.
Twins on the upswing: there are more people.
A regular Shriners' parade of funerals.
But there are not less people.
There are more people
of all sorts, conditions and flavors.
Getting to shake each
by the hand takes time.
Not more though
than abstracting the grain of dust
from each raindrop. Starfish
have no sense of time, at all.

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The Master of the Golden Glow

An irregular rattle (shutters) and
a ferule tapped
on a blackboard—or where you come from
do they say chalkboard?—anyway it's not any sort of pointer
it's a sash facing west
wood and glass drummed on by autumn tatters.
Say, who are you
anyway? "I think we may have met before.
God knows I've heard enough about you."
That largest maple—
half its leaves an undreamt of butter:
if only safflower oil
were the color of its name
the way olive oil is. "Why,
don't you *like* butter?"
The doctor's youngest son
paddles the canoe while he (the doctor) casts
for mud-flavored carp in the long brackish pond:
Agawam, meaning lake. Lake Pond,
Pond Lake, Lake Lake, Pond Pond.
Its short waves jumping up and down
in one place with surplus energy to spend.
Somewhere, out of the wind,
the wind collects a ripe debris.
"I'll tell you who I am: someone
you never met
though on a train you studied a boil on my neck
or bumped into me
leaving a late late party
'Sorry'
or saw throwing bones in the ocean
for an inexhaustible retriever."
The wind drops. The sky darkens
to an unfathomable gray
and through hardware cloth one
leaf is seen to fall
describing the helixes of conch shell cores
gathered in summer, thrown out in autumn.
More litter, less clutter.

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Ilford Rose Book

Thank you for your letter
and its extenuations. "He
said to tell them it is they
not he who said
a drawing can be illustrationy."
Another night. The grass
yellower. And the elms close in.
Flaming gray to the west
a blinding shadow. Dusty Easter
eggs, an ashtray no one
will wash, Dad
with all his buttons on
back in the watch-fob days.

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Bill Berkson

Thursday's News

It's a socket—I don't know how,
but you soon learn to count millions into that province;
they roar and change, and that's all,
as if the way the least likely affection
might tap the unsuspecting on the shoulder
and remorse for thoughtlessness usher in.
Your painful cause be this morning's
birdbath. And here the blues match up.

You see it's wonderful how each function betrays the other—
meet yearning raining through a yawn—
so that the fool know his mother's voice
from the first syllable, only feeding-time
becomes the trustiest ritual,
like a light impatient to shine,
a cathartic experience.

1966

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Variation

Half-ended melodies are purer.
To no longer perform in broad daylight,
the apple's a radish for it,
the winter chill a living thing.
But take your brother into later learning:
Let the girls who will smell the buried cloves there.

So I am only beginning to learn what I from time to time forget.
But throw away these childish things!

Barney's coffin disappeared,
and luckily you said the right thing
for the sky mentioned for the last time.
The little master of smalltalk
is really the seducer of your every move,
taking you into his confidence the way a cat his mouse.

And still young Lycidas cannot express himself fully.
(And) "Everyone is the same"

even down to his jockey shorts, *dolce far niente*, as they say.

1964

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Frank Lima

News

For Tony and Erma Towle

Today I am in the room watching the sun evaporate.
I recognize *Bathsheba* almost perfectly preserved
In turquoise and jade. Above, it has fangs and a
Field of human teeth the color of red lacquer with a thin
Mouth of green patina.

The islands are still obscure like iron eyes on the
Surface of the sea. On the left, a woman, the triangular
Type gently swelling over the figure of a man. It is Venice,
The city of beautiful cows and gentle rains of dull maroon.
This remarkable head of Man once belonged to a mortuary in
Oran. He was buried so his ideas might be better known.

There are women in the snow with different colors in their hair.
They float through my vision much greater than the sky.
Their lines remind me of the seashore and the reflections
In the rocks, like smoke and ash in a dream. We must never
Become so involved; I am eleven inches high and I can lose
You in a photograph like a rope dancer.

Glucose and sodium bicarbonate: A flowing river after a hang-ove
My head is set in motion, my arms begin to move and I can hear.
It must be the day of judgment, the alarm clock has stopped!
I want to be in South America where there is no water to make
Alcohol. My apartment is a jungle. Nothing must move.
We have five seconds to die. I will collapse instead, like spring.

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Penicillin

To Harold Krieger

Here I am born a brilliant mistake from infinity
And the idea of existence reminds me of turtles
December is the day of insects in bloom for a horoscope
The duty of love is hiding a corner of flesh
A hot mouth with beautiful teeth

The earth is familiar to me small and beautiful
Like a cup of coffee a running joke in the mornings

I am breathless in this mad race with the butterflies
They encircle my head and choke the air in my chest
To remind me of my body when it snows on finger tips

What becomes of a poet with a common cold? Nothing.
I want to own the air and glitter in a hot shower
Because I have copied everything I have seen.

Submarine

I can not feel her voice I am too far away skiing in Austria.
Perhaps I will go to another country disguised as frozen gas
And travel beneath her skirt into the center of the earth.
I have an air bubble in my ear that needs light.
It is yellow as I slip over the lintel to correct the sun.

Here is a white charm. My hand can not hold it.
The stars are lost and the birds have absorbed the wind.
It doesn't matter I am going mad listening to the noises—
The young girls on the waves. They are white like telephones.
My arms are tired and they will not let me go because I refuse
To undress them without passionate words.

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The Orchid Stories

Kenward Elmslie

I

Locust Gleanings

Bubbers was standing on tiptoes, his wily face pressed against the bars of the entrance gate that led to a fine old Kentucky estate known as "Locust." In her fifties—Bubbers had —her—her—

Mattie and Bubbers talked of "low-cost this" and "low-cost that" until Edith, tracing diagrams in the dust with her cane, said, "Mattie, let's buy it and call it 'Low-cost'!" Bubbers—

The front façade was timbered in gently silvered pine. On the front door, an itinerant painter had sketched two profiles —Mattie and Bubbers. The downstairs consisted of a sunporch filled with rubber plants, wicker furniture, and ferns hanging in Indian baskets from gilt chains. Next: the entrance hall, a circular room with three niches in one wall in which three teakwood busts were set—Mattie and Bubbers and Edith. The living room opened onto the sequestered rose garden with the gap in the hedge through which the ocean sparkled, the ocean actually being a huge mural series painted on white marble slabs replete with fishing smacks, liners, gulls, dolphins, a whale spout, and several peopled life rafts. The dining room led to the breakfast room, kitchen, servants' pantry and intercom and outside phone wall, down into the tunnels through smelly dirt. "Feel the cold pipes." In her forties, Bubbers had—her—her—

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Edith's nickname was Lady Knickers. That's what she wore, for outings—afternoon lie-downs—morning socials—the regattas—the golf-matches—the bridge competitions, the charity sandwich get-togethers, the ghost story marathons on the bluffs above the city, the lazy row-boat expeditions down the dis-used canal system, where weeping willows drooped, trailing small sere droppings that yellowed and hardened into small prickly balls every autumn. Bubbers, in her thirties, had—her—her—

It had been autumn that time Mattie and she were looking for a place to settle, and land around Hiramville was dirt-cheap. An invasion of Acacians had displaced the Scotch-Irish "Black Spanish" mountaineers, rigorous Huguenots who headed westward across the Wall of Lakes, as they called it, fanning out into settlements on islands in the N.P. Region, as they called it (New Paris?), from where they wrote intensely codified letter-poems of deaths and births to Mattie.

> Matthew dear, Bet and Graciosa have finished
> their rabbit hutch.
> Thanks to python miasma, they began to feel
> so out-of-touch
> they undertook to build a covered bridge across
> the swamp.
> They plan to take the mango harvest to P'tou-
> ville where romp
> mulatto brats in gutters full of excrement and
> mushy fruit.
> P'touville, sixty miles away, was built by some
> galoot
> out of cartons, tins, driftwood, discarded bal-
> last. Bug bites
> turn one's skin into a fierce inferno. On sum-
> mer nights,
> under protective nettings, we gather in front
> of Calvin's Shrine.
> Surrounded by orchid bushes, his marble ruffle
> shimmers in the moonshine.

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Baby Doda is dead. Terry breathed his last
(ninety years old)
on X-mas Eve. Wet spring. The mangos are
pre-sold,
and the Co-op will gross eight million yen.
Angel statues now number (they intrigue the
spider monkeys) ten;
Number Six is half-concealed by a bougain-
villea bush,
a mere seedling last year. Its blossoms push
and sway against the orchid bushes around
6's wings.
The contours of its face resemble yours; it sings
somedays of Hiramville, canals, weeping wil-
lows in the snow,
or so it seems to those of us who miss you all.
Love, Joe.

Edith whisked through European spas, till her penchant for fronds came to a head. To the islands! Batting at leaves, drugged with heavy jungle odors they sat through excruciating meals.

Mattie died and they returned to settle the estate. Edith and Bubbers met a young drifter. The deserted fishing camp. She looked down through the floor-boards at Phil, reading the *Popular Mechanics* magazine he had purchased in the drugstore, along with the Swedish metal comb, a pack of Shadows, and a pocket-knife. Three weeks later, Edith was found asphyxiated in a motel bathroom, a bathmat soaked with chloroform over her head, and in one hand, a blue and pink mottled "Locust" orchid, grown in the hot-house of Locust Mansion (from a cutting sent by Joe), which Mattie had left—unaccountably—to Bubbers. In her twenties—her—

Even in her teens, Edith enjoyed demise parodies.

"Orchids take on the form of little birds, lizards, insects, man, woman, of sinister fighters in a death-embrace, of lazy

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tortoises basking upside-down in the sun, of agile and ever-chattering monkeys screened by fronds. If they don't make us laugh, they surely excite—"

So saying, Edith likely as not'd rush from the room, slam her door from behind which would issue forth the most desperate noises (chokes, gasps, "Help! Murderer! Fire, fire!") and likely as not, a blood-colored liquid (from her chemistry set) would ooze out from under the door as she'd go into her demise parody ("Send for Father Pierre: it's my heart!"—"My life is whirling past: hello, Mama Stephanie, hello Baby Doda, hello Genevieve's baroque inner climate, someone smells of sourgrass, aha, that old rancher Dade Morris, that's who, going backwards now, people moving funnily, jumping up on diving-boards, climbing off of trains backwards, ha-ha, happy, ha-pp-ee!"—"In the dark tunnel, hear me, Bubbers: in a dark tunnel on a scoot-car, my knuckles are bone-white, happy, ha-pp-ee!")—followed by a thump. We'd rush inside, having battered down the door only to see she'd fled out the other door, having kicked chairs and tables in our way, across the verandah, and locked herself in the guest bathroom downstairs, from which came a long succession of suspicious plop-plop sounds (stale bread carried in a bag tied around her neck, along with rocks gathered on walks in the summer), and then, finally, a long sigh, "Ha-pp-ee"—then the worst of all, a black foamy liquid dribbling out under the door, and silence, irrevocable silence. At this point, we'd creep away, and do our best to salvage the day; when she came down to dinner, no mention was ever made of Edith's demise parody penchant.

Bubbers handed me the "death" orchid, Edith's orchid, already brown.

"Throw it far away."

I went into the garden and put the orchid in my pocket.

Bubbers lay beside me, and cranked up his portable victrola to listen to *Gilda Grey*, his favorite movie-star operetta. The story of a silent screen star who falls on evil days, his fa-

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vorite aria, *Alien Moon*, was sung by Gilda Grey in a hotel room in Alabama overlooking the Gulf of Mexico.

Gilda: Emergencies of the heart,
Let me be.
Alien moon.
Hilda has left,
The horror creature.
The sullen loungers
On the city dump
Are like orchids of desire to me.
The luxury of neon at noon
Gives these skinny boys
The pallor of an alien moon,
Alien moon.

I picked up the record and broke it on a red boulder. A deer stood watching from the edge of the forest across the ravine. I was filled with a weird awareness of birds and vines. That night, we listened to the Death Scene of *Gilda Grey* on the Magnavox:

Gilda: My life is whirling past.
Fire, fire!
Apples and apricots
In a dark tunnel.
I Gilda Grey cannot see the sun.
Gilda cannot see the moon.
Harvest, harvest soon.

The machine went haywire at this point, spitting records into the ravine. Bubbers told me to call him Mummers from then on, and I did.

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II

"Native Innards"

Mummers was wearing black and was in his fifties. We were in Sweden to take Mummers' mind off death. "Stockholm's modernity oppresses me," he said, soon after we were settled in our hotel accomodations. "Hard edges everywhere, nothing pockmarked, no granules, no soft round squishy places in the streets. Heat should make things quiver, but here the heat freezes things into an extremely tasteless immobility redolent of the most arrogant narcissism: namely death. As the great astronomer Sir William Herschel exclaimed when he saw a vast area of sky that seemed to be starless, *Hier ist wahrhaftig ein Loch in Himmel*—Here is surely a hole in the sky!"

That afternoon we took a bus to Oslo. We proceeded to an island north of Oslo.

Mummers' mood improved appreciably the following morning when he found a retired opera singer to look after us children. That night, Mummers and Mummy played bridge with a couple called the Schmidlapps. Dr. Schmidlapp was a tall ungainly man who tended to personalize nature. He was wont to refer to seeds as "expert hitchhikers," to say that sloths "dine" on leaves, and to liken the genes to a pack of cards, which, in the germ-cells, is shuffled and arranged in many different ways, dealing each of us a different "hand." A sharp drop in the temperature invariably made him dream that he was wandering through the chilly caverns in an iceberg, and the noise of a door suddenly slammed shut by the wind alchemized into the report of a gun fired by a bandit, in a dream of Dr. Schmidlapp's, a typical dream. He was a specialist in the upper respiratory tract. Every year, he came to this same island accompanied by his wife and a handful of devoted

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patients. The change of scene was good for all of them. That summer, when I encountered my second important orchid, five patients came with Dr. and Mrs. Schmidlapp. The group comprised Gladys Jacomb, an English ex-vaudevillian, Dennis, her husband, a retired stock broker, Evalyn B., a hair stylist, Georgette B., her sister, a publicity agent, and Herman Ott, a car dealer of German extraction. Which one of these people grew "Native Innards"?

The answer is: Mrs. Schmidlapp.

In-between research tests, Mrs. Schmidlapp had a great deal of free time. Florida life was easy. She had many hours to herself, in fact, for the doctor preferred to do the cooking when he came home from the office, in order to unwind, as he put it. On the way to the office, he did the marketing, stopping off again on the way home to pick up the one or two cartons of groceries and comestibles the store manager held in readiness for him. They ate simply. A typical week's dinners would be:

MONDAY—

LAMB CHOPS BAKED POTATOES
STRING BEANS AVOCADO CUT IN
TWO WITH RUSSIAN DRESSING
ORANGE SHERBERT ICED COFFEE

TUESDAY—

SHRIMP CASSEROLE MIXED GREEN
SALAD ORANGE JELLO ICED COFFEE

WEDNESDAY—

BOSTON BAKED BEANS MINTED CARROTS
COTTAGE CHEESE SALAD HALF-A-GRAPE-
FRUIT COFFEE AND A LIQUEUR (THE
AVERAGE LIQUEUR BOTTLE WOULD LAST
THEM, SAY, FIVE, SIX WEEKS, SO WHEN
THEY'D RUN OUT, THEY'D SWITCH FLAVORS
THOUGH COGNAC WAS THEIR FAVORITE STAND-
BY)

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THURSDAY—FRIDAY—SATURDAY—

REPEATS OF THE MONDAY-TUESDAY-WEDNESDAY MENUS

SUNDAY—

STEAK MASHED POTATOES PEAS NO SALAD ICE CREAM CAKE FOR DESSERT AND ICED COFFEE.

Dr. Schmidlapp preferred to do the cooking, but she laid the table. Blue was her favorite color, and so blue plates it was (blue plate specials, as she called them) and blue napkins. She had no close women friends—the vapid talk of the doctors' wives got on her nerves—and any romantic dalliance was out of the question, to her way of thinking, for she adhered to a rigid sexual schedule:

MONDAY—

Doctor in sailor costume, she is "tart." Drunk scene, one personal belonging broken or destroyed. Changes into "virgin." He promises to repent, offers to give her a good home and provide for her and little sister, Muriel. Exits. Returns as Muriel. "Virgin." Changes into "tart." Expulsion scene. Ice-breaker in Alaska scene. Muriel is a General's wife. Falling asleep in the forest, one on each side of the General. Exit. Doctor returns as sailor, kidnaps Muriel to Brazil. Hacienda sleeps. Kiss "Native Innards" orchid.

TUESDAY—

Doctor is twelve-year-old boy on his Easter vacation, in any big city. She is waitress. She takes him home, etc. In icebox, orchid. They eat it, imbues them with sexual powers. Intercoursing.

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WEDNESDAY—

She is a twelve-year-old native girl in South Africa. He is a German tourist, pre-World War I. Jungle episode. The attack of the toucans. The ants. Blackwater fever, drifting downstream. Hiram the Cockney. First outpost. Teaching her the rudiments of English. Pregnancy. Radio report of Armistice Day. He returns to civilization. Their farewell. Exchange orchids.

THURSDAY—FRIDAY—SATURDAY—

REPEATS OF THE MONDAY-TUESDAY-WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE

SUNDAY—

They bathe together, fellow patients in a sanitorium for the well-to-do. Immediate attraction, etc. Escape to any big city, jobs, money, success, friends. Grow rare orchids in penthouse greenhouse.

To fill her empty Florida days, she invented a portable greenhouse. The window-pane sections moved on slats in such a way that they folded, accordion style, fitting into four largish padded boxes. Dr. Schmidlapp and his wife could assemble the greenhouse easily in an afternoon, assisted by his "traveling" patients. Mrs. Schmidlapp's greenhouse sat outside my room on the spacious hotel lawn. By now, it was an annual occurrence, and the other hotel guests accepted the glass-and-chrome structure as evidence of summer, along with the holly tree blossoms, the avid insects and the lazy sounds of any hot day anywhere. She preferred to travel with the greenhouse to Norway, summers, for the doctor's vacation routine was not so dissimilar from his workaday routine: both revolved around constant scientific research to lessen his patients' breathing discomfort. He spared no one, least of all himself, and often his world was confined to batches of bottles

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with labels which had to be kept at a constant temperature and shaken up at specific intervals; readings had to be jotted down and collated. In the bottles were phlegm samplings, scrapings from lungs, throat matter, saliva, gum samplings, scrapings from teeth, scrapings from throat skin, mouth skin, face skin—all taken at specific intervals. Dr. Schmidlapp was obsessed by the inter-relationships between air, weather, family ties, and "breath pulse." One of his grateful patients had sent Mrs. Schmidlapp a cutting from a relative's coffee finca in the interior of Brazil. This cutting had developed two summers before during the Schmidlapps' Norwegian sojourn into the "Native Innards"—purplish leaves, and an inner opening, black streaked with green, like the markings on a wasp, surrounded by a pumpkin-yellow band, bumpy and sticky at night, smooth and dry by day. It was this orchid Mummy spied and prized in the greenhouse.

Mummy went into Oslo the next day and bought a night watchman's outfit, overalls and flashlight and all, plus a sheepwool coat, hooded, with a string system to close the face opening to a size commensurate with the weather. Mummy put it on as soon as she returned to the island, and lay down on her bed, too exhausted to go down to dinner. Mrs. Schmidlapp was "feeding her face," as Mummers described it: vichyssoise, melon, and Italian ham, followed by the Swiss national dish—fondue—little pieces of filet mignon individually dipped into peanut oil. On each guest's plate were various sauces which each guest dipped the meat pieces in, after they were cooked sufficiently in the peanut oil, which simmered at each table in receptacles kept warm by Bunsen burners. For the dessert, the guests had their choice of vanilla ice cream, strawberry mousse, or junket. After which the guests gathered in the magazine room for coffee. Mummy's plan was to steal the orchid while the Schmidlapps were at dinner, looking to all intents and purposes like a night watchman. Unfortunately, Mummy's appetite got the better of her, and she ordered room-service, forgetting about the inevitable confrontation with the waiter. She was resting in bed in her get-up, and Mum-

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mers was lying beside her, massaging a tense spot in the back of her neck, when the waiter entered. He put down the tray on the nearest table, bowed several times, and left unceremoniously.

The upshot of the matter was: Mummers slipped out at dawn, broke a window of the greenhouse, reached in, and snipped off the "Native Innards" orchid with Mummy's nail scissors. Unapprehended, Mummers rushed back upstairs, and in his haste, slammed the bedroom door shut. Dr. Schmidlapp, in the room next door, awakened with a start from a dream of a gun fired by a bandit, again and again, first at his patients, then his wife, then—as the gun was aimed in his direction—he woke up. He sat bolt upright, and in doing so, yanked the covers off his wife. The crisp Norwegian air made her shiver, and she recalled dreaming of a labyrinth in an iceberg, comprised of chilly chasms and caverns. Unable to move her legs, she noticed Eskimo troops silhouetted on the edge of the volcano-shaped rim at the center of which she lay paralyzed. Her mouth was sealed with bandage tapes forming an "X" pattern, and she was unable to breathe. To her left, a crowd was attempting to inch through a small egress in the snow, a simple hole that looked as if it had been dug by some arctic creature in search of a cubbyhole. Angrily, the crowd turned on her, as if their slow progress was somehow her fault, and at this point, she woke up, a few scant seconds after her husband.

We left the next morning, with the "Native Innards" tucked innocuously in George my younger brother's birdcage, packed into an empty Lucky Strike cigarette carton on a cushion of moss, concealed by a tattered tarpaulin cover. Mummy left her night watchman outfit behind, and I sometimes wonder what the hotel manager must have thought when he opened the closet and saw her regalia. We flew back to Sweden, and from there took a luxury liner to New York. A party of us went to the graveyard where Edith and Mattie lay buried, and placed "Native Innards" on the soil where a few blades of grass were beginning to lengthen and droop, wilted

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by the summer heat. We passed the orchid from hand to hand, but Mummy did the actual placing of the orchid on the soil. She took off her black veil, her black blouse and slacks, and slipped into a white summer dress. Then she bent down, retrieved the orchid, put it back in its cigarette carton and we clambered back into the spacious limousine hired for the occasion. When we got home, it was my duty to put the orchid (still in its box) in the attic. All I remember is the unbearable heat, and motes in the air, and the feeling of time suspended: infinite days.

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III

Streetcar

On a streetcar in Hode, Arkansas, I glimpsed the next orchid. I was on my way downtown to the movies, a real Saturday excursion: banana fritters at the bus terminal cafe, then candy bombs from Frude's (I referred to bonbons as bombs at that age) which I would count, and as each cinnamon and lemon and strawberry pellet was tiny, I brought envelopes and always allotted at least thirty minutes for this—now I mention it, my counting mania was so powerful, little except counting during the day happened. Telephone poles. Cracks in the sidewalk. How long I could hold my breath. Or how many times I could rub my member against my leg up and down without a blue nation occurring, "blue nation" being my term for ejaculation which I thought meant "swear-word." I don't recall how I arrived at "blue nation," except that I always thought of oceans as nations in my dog-eared Rand-McNally; in fact they seemed the biggest nations in the world as far as land-areas, and I evolved whole honey-combed fantasies of the King of the Blue Nation of the Pacific Ocean, blue of course because they were blue in the atlas, the water-areas.

This particular day, I got on the streetcar in Hode, Arkansas, on my way downtown to the movies, a real Saturday adventure. I had just locked myself in the guest bathroom downstairs with the nice little pink towels and perfumed soap with the gooey underside (Geraldine, the cook, used to secretly use it to get rid of the fish odor on her hands which she claimed kitchen soap—Ivory—didn't do) and had taken down my pants to stare, bent down, between my legs at my rear-end in the full-length mirror. I counted six "acid underwear transom wallops." Far from atypical in any lad's development, that's

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what Mummers called the blotches on my behind: "acid underwear transom wallops." He often made up word meanings. "Alligator" was his word for elevator. On our first trip to Rose Park, we went to the observation booth at the top of the sandstone natural formation nicknamed "The Kissy Guns." At nighttime, searchlight beams picked out the phosphorescent sails of the rafts of the wetbacks on their way to new harvests far below. We waited in front of a closed door with numbers that flickered on and off above its top edge. Two round black buttons at eye level had "Up" and "Down" printed in red. Mummers pushed "Up," and mumbled about smelly excursionists confined in an airless space, and how he dreaded "closets that bump." The numbers blinked six, then five, then four. Mummers said, "Where can that silly snip of an alligator-girl be?" I ran out onto the mesa to escape this dreadful monster with ordinary legs, wearing a skirt no doubt, with an ordinary torso and arms, perhaps accoutered in a frilly blouse, but with gaping jaws and glittering rows of pointed teeth ready and waiting to chomp me to bits and pieces. I clutched the cold rocks, and sobbed and sobbed. Then I went back, and you can bet I went up by foot, around and around the cage-like stairway. The view was a distinct disappointment. It was twilight, when the sun on the horizon seems to flatten into an orange pie-dish surrounded by mauve bushes heavy with wispy white "semen-in-the-bathtub" excrescences. A lunar moth battered against the glass. Time to go! Phil was impatient to get back to Kentucky. Back down the cage! As luck would have it, just as I reached the ground floor, I let out a yelp. The "alligator" door opened to disgorge Mummers, Phil, Puppy Mack, and Jo-anne! Instead of the creature I dreaded, I saw a pretty girl in a Civil War-type hoop skirt with a bonnet and long white gloves on. "Observation booth," she said. I didn't wait for the doors to close again! I might mention I've always had great trouble pinning down what "allegation" meant. It always conjures up pictures of hills, scalloped Swiss alps, with neat ski furrows, sky-rides, luminous clouds of midges, the gabled roofs of Danzig near the waterfront with those festoons of gray chains that fascinated Rilke.

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Vehicles have always made me nervous, and the Maple Street streetcar of Hode, Arkansas, was no exception. When I woke up that morning, I was resolved to go on a Saturday excursion. I decided to see *Dog Roots* at the Health Museum, for the third time. It was an absolutely pure kinetic map of elongated greenish and white blobs that adhered tenaciously to a barren earth surface (yes; definitely mesa-like) until dome-shaped cell growths began to proliferate at an accelerating tempo, first sluggishly uncoiling and breathing slowly, with long pauses for tiny involuntary quiverings, during which times fungus growths seeped out of gill-like apertures: yellow and green, they sparkled like the snowiest landscape you can imagine, only to disappear back into the cell growths as the breathing process quickened. The point, so-called, and at that age everything still had a point as far as I was concerned, was this: the fungus growths and the dome-shaped cells were totally interdependent—one could not survive without the other. For, as the final section of *Dog Roots* made clear, the cells, being deficient in storage tissues and growth-promoting factors, were incapable of attaining improved growth rates. Comparing the shape and differentiation of the cells, the film showed how the synthesis of niacin played an important part in the organism's pathway through life similar if not identical to the—

The film broke off here, as the information was not complete. Music was played, and the lights in the auditorium came on. After a pause, the movie resumed: images of mammals and certain bread molds equally susceptible to synthesis of niacin. The movie concluded that fungus had an absolutely essential role in supplying vitamins and sustenance to the dome-shaped cells. The mechanism of differentiation, the role of the genetic code, the unusual relationship between the code and differentiation, hinged on the anatomical and chemical changes wrought by fungus, providing the film's denouement: cells formed a female breast out of which spurted a dark cloud (our old friend—fungus) which was dissipated into air, then rain, then snow, which fell on a New Englandish town replete with white picket fences and a white tower.

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People appeared on their way to church dressed as Pilgrims. A hymn—"Jesus the Beautiful"—came out of a loudspeaker in the central plaza. A man in a sombrero passed carrying a shovel. Nightfall. Digging scene. In the soil, the movement of cells proliferating was caught, recapitulating the growth and breath process—gills, fungus clouds, the formation of deadly red blossoms. The blossoms blurred as they increased in number, covering the round hillock. The camera, lunging up into the sky with a dropsical motion, introduced a new vantage point which turned the hillock into an unmistakable breast out of which issued fungus. Symbiosis!

Whole days passed when I rarely left my room. Friday night I could barely sleep so involved was I in my Saturday excursion, to see *Dog Roots*. I rehearsed getting on the streetcar in my mind's eye—the steps, reaching in my coat pocket for the dime, saying hello to the uniformed attendant. In point of fact, a new attendant was sitting in the green booth beside the curtained conductor. A bunch of loud women got on, wearing minks and orchids. A bony girl in her teens with steel-rimmed spectacles and braces on her teeth accompanied them. In one hand, she held a pink noisemaker, and on the lapel of her black velvet break-away coat was pinned a blue-and-gray orchid. I stared at it so relentlessly she tossed it to me, with studied nonchalance. Her party got off at the next stop, opposite the Museum of Health. I had decided to get off several stops further on, and then walk back to the Health Museum, influenced by a momentary obsession that the curtained conductor might see me heading for the Museum and might surmise that I was seeing *Dog Roots* for the third time—it seemed all too probable he'd remember the preceding Saturdays I'd gotten off at this same stop, at around the same time in order to catch the early morning show. I pried the streetcar window open and halloing, threw the orchid to her feet. At that moment, the light changed—she was forced to retreat to the far curb, following the loud orchid women. Traffic obliterated the orchid. I kept thinking with fury how the petals would stick to the elephant-trunk-color tires. At

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that moment the light changed to red, just as three armament trucks pulled up, jammed with soldiers surrounding a hooded weapon that was carried in the first vehicle, with an extension that was tied to the second and third vehicles. I recall a group of factory workers was getting on, burly men from some Balkan culture, judging from their heavy mustaches and swart complexions. The inexperienced ticket-taker was having difficulty making change. She had handed one of the factory workers a Mexican peso he refused to accept. In addition, four members of a holy order were loathe to get off the streetcar in full view of the soldiers in the armament trucks. The ticket-taker was remonstrating with the conductor (through the curtain) not to start up the streetcar until the monks could step onto the traffic island with impunity—as it was, the soldiers saw the monks standing by the open exit, and immediately began making ribald gestures at them. Capering in an exaggeratedly effeminate manner, the soldiers pantomimed putting lipstick on, smoothing down their eyebrows, forming spit-curls, while others more daring pulled up imaginary skirts salaciously, wiggling their bodies like monstrous showgirls, while still others imitated attitudes of reverence and devotion. Pointing to their hands with amazement, two soldiers, apparently identical twins, rejoiced at the discovery of stigmata. The light changed again, and the situation resolved itself—the three armament trucks with a grinding of gears moved off, prompting the soldiers to enact a ballet of gauchery: thrown off balance by the motion of the trucks, they clung to each other, as if for dear life, giggling and primping like silly schoolgirls. One of the monks snapped his fingers as if to signify he'd forgotten something. He tapped his head with his forefinger three times, and sat back down. The others did likewise, and the exit door closed. Their decision to remain in the streetcar prompted a new interchange between the conductor and the ticket-taker. The cars at the intersection had by this time moved past, and I could see the entrance to the Health Museum. The ladies were lined up in front of a revolving door, watching the girl revolve and revolve.

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IV

Eugene V. Debs' Last Mackintosh

> "The skin of my face has a certain amount of color of its own, but the main part of the color of my face is the blood shining through my skin. It is my heart that drives the blood through the skin of my face. When a person is frightened, the nerves running from his brain to the heart interfere with the circulation, so scarcely any blood is sent through the blood vessels directly underneath the skin of the face. We see pallor."
>
> —EUGENE V. DEBS

★★★★★

White is the color of true memory, I soon discerned. The greenness of old fjords faded, and the foam of old oceans grew more and more violent in retrospect. Memories of storms? White clouds, white rain, mists swirling around white cities. Crazy avenues slanting up and up, sidewalks with mica glinting in the sun! And then the distancing would begin. First pavement stone. The crack. Second pavement stone. Second crack. It's a movie, a little movie, oblong in shape. The tiny camera traipses along, watches the crack-and-pavement succession, follows it bumping right along at a fast clip. Dizzy feeling of depression. Eatery. Then crates, and in them, white stone orchids. Chip away at the surfaces. Find the prizes. Ribbons with grooves. Chip away further. Needle. And further in, the sound-ribbon machine. Screw in the needle. Place ribbon in fixative position. Crank. Message ensues.

> "This is Eugene Debs, your childhood hero. How white my cell is. And how white the votes in the presidential election. They have sent me a sample one, disqualified as fraudulent. Stapled onto it is a graffiti

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> of an asparagus, poised above an ear with a diamond earring shaped like a harvest moon, with a tiny man carrying a sickle (seed-pearls), and towards the ear, drops of something plummet, numbered one to ten. Five is named 'Eugene V. Debs' Last Mackintosh.' Ssshhh. Ssshhh."

The sounds repeat. Literally entranced, I have a vision of a Mayan Indian, with a squat brown body and a small Semitic nose. He lives by a roadside, pretends to be asleep, but I sense he is watching my progress through the jungle. Tree frogs chatter away, and I am amazed by the violent perfumes. In swift succession, sandalwood gives way to a dead fish stink which in turn gives way to a carnation odor. The Mayan holds up two placards: an asparagus (#1) and an ear (#2). He places the asparagus behind the ear, and miraculously a flower forms—to my great joy an orchid. The Mayan vanishes, and the orchid diminishes grotesquely in size, as if it were being transported down a tunnel dimly lit. I feel a dropping sensation: a trap door in an aeroplane has sprung open, releasing me into pure sky. I fall and fall. The flower reappears directly below me. I fall into it. I am in a round chamber with antennae that brush my entire body, which is naked. I notice, with a heavy feeling of dread, that the chamber isn't really round, but ear-shaped. My penis stiffens, and though I feel no excitation, ten drops of semen issue from it, and float in the air, circling around me weightlessly. They enter my ear, just as the sound-ribbon of Eugene V. Debs' voice begins its second message.

> "There are three main reasons for the loss of ancient history. We know we find black people living in the hottest parts of the earth, in many places where white men find it uncomfortable to live. Evidently, the black races serve as shields. In the course of time, that meeting place is our horizon. Second, the higher up we are, we can look around the sides of an object a little, and this helps us to see that the object is solid or deep or in front or behind something else. Third, in our aerial shield, we are in serious trouble. Things more and more blanch. A craven need for man-made

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jungles obsesses the city-dweller and his Dutch uncle alike. Networks of shrubbery obscure familiar routes (grocery store to pawnshop to bakery to beauty parlor vs. barbershop to pool hall to cigarstore to public baths to park bench), connections break down, except by circuitous underground paths, chiseled out painstakingly through solid rock by the conquered. I sit here in my cell, awaiting my purgatory:

A) Trip to Jungle
B) Search for Flower
C) Ascent to Heaven

Winter in Atlanta is cold. Stone universe. The Jungle (i.e. "Dutch uncle") is the proletariat, awaiting the hurricane of social justice. The flower is—foo, Eugene. Don't defoliate your interior! Simply move on, and on some more, and on some more. And whoever finds this journal, look in my mackintosh, the mackintosh they impounded upon my admission, and in the right pocket—foo, the guard. Message ess..."

★★★★★

It was in summer we came to "Debs'" orchid, most unexpectedly in the Clothing Wing of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. Ferns painted white and Mayan faces decorated the exhibit on three sides of what was a replica of a prison cell. A naked electric lightbulb hung from the ceiling. A gaunt mannikin with sagging shoulders and a creased forehead lay on a triple-tiered bunk. Identical mannikins lay on the top and middle tier. I noticed a crudely lettered label to the right of the bunk: EUGENE V. DEBS' LAST MACKINTOSH. ATLANTA PENITENTIARY, 1923. As I peered at the exhibit, a quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson came to mind: *Every hero becomes a bore at last.*

★★★★★

"Man. Intelligent. Beings. Enemies. Africa. Act for. Or show."

More second message from Eugene V. Debs had come to mind, but this time the words blocked out of my ear by the ten drops filled in, miraculously, one after another:

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1) is the most
2) of living
3) to escape his
4) he spread into Europe and
5) he cannot
6) himself
7) what he likes

which, put together, formed the thought:

> Man is the most intelligent of living beings. To escape his enemies, he spread into Europe and Africa. He cannot act for himself or show what he likes.

My appetite whetted, I waited until the guard had passed down the corridor, past the CAGE OF EAGLES and the EASTER ON THE FIRST SUBMARINE. I crept under the bottom bunk, and using my jackknife, cut a hole in the mattress. I peered into the hole, and, lighting a match, saw a mackintosh pocket above me. I reached through the hole into the pocket. My hand touched an object. I grabbed it, removed it, and painstakingly got it through the hole. To my astonishment, it was one-third of an orchid made of artificial materials. On one petal, completely white, was scrawled (with an effect as offensive as that of an obscene tattoo of sexual congress on a child's body):

A) TRIP TO JUNGLE

The guard returned from CAGE OF EAGLES and EASTER ON THE FIRST SUBMARINE. He sauntered off in the opposite direction—I heard him light a cigarette, and in the distance, I heard a water fountain start and stop. I climbed into the first bunk, and huddled next to the mannikin, pulling the mackintosh over me. Again I took out my knife. Cut. Hole. Look through. Mackintosh pocket. Reach in. Object. Retrieve. Another third of orchid. Scrawled:

B) SEARCH FOR FLOWER

Appetite whetted. Huddle. Knife. Cut. Hole. Pocket. Object. Retrieve. Scrawled:

C) ASCENT TO HEAVEN

Orchid complete. All white. At that moment I looked up. The lightbulb blinded me. On it was written circularly:

ICEBOX.

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V

Icebox

The following entries from my diary may shed some light on the "Icebox" orchid.

> Farty dog in J's Jag. J opens window, snow alights on my face. J's nervoso question: return to NYC, tryst or work? Big Grabber nickname conceals frantic inner butterfly wings of—huh—stop dishing up cop-out compliments and pass me the cawfee: datsa right—breakfast rejoinder *Ein. Zwei* vass—Dum-di-dum-di-dum—*Downtown. Drei* vass: lake is ideal for skating, but it would involve going to town to buy skates, and the time there and back in the Jag would make me a wreck—the close proximity and feeling of isolation. If I were more disciplined as a person, I'd concentrate on remembering the roads visually, and when I got home, I'd lie down and unreel the roads carefully. Then I could focus on J better. Hard to see J except when I get the "hurty-hurts." Details stand out chillingly: sleep segments in eyes, body hair, the foreign texture of skin. Also today a thin sheet of ice formed over everything from about one to three o'clock and you simply couldn't stand up on it. It took J forty-five minutes to even get home from school and he said he fell down hundreds of times. I got so worried about him I went out on the porch to look and see if I could see him anywhere and my feet went out from under me and I landed on my left hip real hard and bounced down the steps. When people came out of the offices and stores uptown they had to get on their hands and

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knees and crawl to their cars and then lots of them ended up staying in hotels and not even going home. Main skating problem: fear of the ice giving way. Plunge into black water. Lake water isn't really black—even with cloudburst-type storm clouds stuck above it. Another worry: clothing. It would get so heavy, hard to climb back up. Plus if I skate today—it will set up a pattern exhausting to keep up, and J will feel neglected back up at the house. As a child, my ankles were always wobbly, and I never relished bundling up for an outing. I much preferred staying indoors, so I could watch the others come back and take off their things. Sounds in the hall. Talk about what they did outside. And when they open the magazines, I feel unutterably content. As lovely a moment as the loveliest part of my South Desire:

> four women on a porch cross out words in a novel slowly, one at a time, one word at a time, one word per woman, handing the book around, each with a red crayon, and every so often, a page is turned, another two pages done, and I look to see how far along they are, hours to go yet, hours. Drowsiness assails me, a hummy feeling all through my body, the way certain grass fields tickle. I want them so much to sip cokes too, raising the bottles at different times, slowly, but they don't. If only they'd put the novel down, and do their nails, buffing it's called, isn't it? Then they could take down their hair, and unplait the parts that hang down to their waists, and do it up again, for now it's dusk and time

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for bed. There I am, on the porch, swinging in the icy air, listening for the four doors to shut softly. Then their radios come on, little swing tunes, as clouds pass over the moon casting shadows on the black garages and underpasses on the outskirts. I peer in each room, in turn, through the transom. Their scissors snip away at the Icebox Orchid design. And when the paper flower is cut out, they set it on fire with long wooden matches struck against their shoes. In the morning I will collect the ashes: North Desire. Absolute happiness.

Summer entry:

No new dezzies to date. Very tired of my South One, but no North One has appeared. Make up fake West One: B is at the piano playing Scriabin. B lives with Fred (Tyrone Power). Mack (Clift) is Fred's partner. They grew up on neighboring farms in Utah. They have drifted through many lands, but none captured their imagination as much as Malaya.

The following entries will deal with tin, the underlying part of West Desire.

NOTE: EUGENE V. DEBS' LAST MACKINTOSH IS IN THE ATTIC IN THE RIGHT POCKET OF A MACKINTOSH, A REPLICA OF THE ONE IN THE SMITHSONIAN CLOTHING WING. MUMMY HAS DIED OF CANCER-OF-THE-MOUTH WHICH MUMMERS BLAMED ON HER FOUL SILENT TREATMENTS PLUS PREDILECTION FOR LEAVING NOTES ON THE STAIRS.

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> Fred is best known for his blue denims and long-sleeved cotton shirts. And for his narrow-toed boots. Fred wears gloves to protect his hands from tin burns in the mines. A tarpaulin is wrapped around his bedroll to keep it dry and clean.
>
> Tin towns are sometimes violent.
>
> The four of us—Fred, Mack, B and I spend whole weeks in the jungle, photoing. Gutta and rubber. Rattan. Napoh plandok. Kanchil. Lotung. Binturong. Rusa. Kijang. Marine environment. Intisy. Voamboana. Soi Vijaya. Golok.

West Desire ends thus:

> Fred, Mack and B drown in the Black Lagoon at midnight of New Year's Eve.

East Desire begins in the following entry, a Desire that carried me through the Philadelphia years, the gray period in Toronto, atlas research, first recuperation, the law office, Marie and Mario, bohr light experiments. Only one more orchid to find!

> Winter in Philly. I snip a photo of an orchid out of an orchid book in the public library. It looks like this: a red leaf under two close rows of fleshy gray-green leaves. At the top, one to three flowers with red dahlia-like spikes circling the tubular center. Four curled long leaves also red spread out on each side of the main red leaf. I put the photo in an envelope and mail it home, addressed to Mummers.

Mummers died on a Thursday. He had been to see Dr. Schmidlapp who strongly advised immediate treatment, plus a summer sojourn in Norway. Due to some organizational mishap, he had not received my "cutting." It arrived two days after the funeral. I took the envelope, unopened, to the attic, and there, I placed it inside the faded cigarette carton, alongside the others.

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Barbara Guest

East of Omsk

for Lawrence

I am living in the Siberia
of your rose
there is a family of us
and we laugh
when the petals fall
in our house
there is a festival every night
called frozen

Which is actually a tree
you cannot recognize
through its icicle burrs
at the last station
to Vladivostok
before taking the boat
to Yokohama
Where it rains
and our memory snow
melts
Only the beast fur
shines in this light of twelve tones
Radiant as a warm
skeleton whose profile
in Yokohama
will be drawn to endorse
the acacia weather
of your rainbow homecoming
Better known in the south
where Yalta reproduces those skiffs
on a soft threshing
coast of pineapple waves
Russia! a natural tribute
to have sent this wordgram
so far
translating "flowers"
from under a pelt cap.

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Saving Tallow

Visible tallow of the hurricane night
thin fair candle
a yacht cradling
the room's deep water
                where the wave
raises
                its sail
a procession
                of shoulders
the falling olives
                on yellow knees
and cities
                drowned
in their comet clothing
                dragged from the sea

                Candle!
lone palm tree lonely diver
covered with sea lice
                most vertical
the room dedicates its curves to you.
                There was once a shadow
called Luis; there was once an eyebrow
whose name was Domingo. Once there
were children, grown-ups, organs;
there were moving legs and there was
speech. In the daylight there were
small whimpers made by the African cat;
in the candlelight there were couplings
of such sonority evening callers
merely left their cards; no one drew back
the curtains; there were no curtains
the candlelight fell on grass and
like a candle up stood the water hose.

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There were many mathematical
forms
the obliquity of a painting
her mouth drawn by a corner
transverses on the arrow light
where the smile flies off
at the room's center a hair part
the nose of a window
louvered as coral rock
where a person walked

was sleepy
must be awakened
for adorations and questions

is marine
related to the diving fish

Take me on your dolphin skin!
I shall be absent soon!

Saving the tallow with capable hands
seizing with the loyal closed eyes of foliage
Puff

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John Ashbery

Spring Day

The immense hope, and forbearance
Trailing out of night, to sidewalks of the day
Like air breathed into a paper city, exhaled
As night returns bringing doubts

That swarm around the sleeper's head
But are fended off with clubs and knives, so that morning
Installs again in cold hope
The air that was yesterday, is what you are,

In so many phases the head slips from the hand.
The tears ride freely, laughs or sobs:
What do they matter? There is free giving and taking;
The giant body relaxed as though beside a stream

Wakens to the force of it and has to recognize
The secret sweetness before it turns into life—
Sucked out of many exchanges, torn from the womb,
Disinterred before completely dead—and heaves

Its mountain-broad chest. "They were long in coming,
Those others, and mattered so little that it slowed them
To almost nothing. They were presumed dead,
Their names honorably grafted on the landscape

To be a memory to men. Until today
We have been living in their shell.
Now we break forth like a river breaking through a dam,
Pausing over the puzzled, frightened plain,

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And our further progress shall be terrible,
Turning fresh knives in the wounds
In that gulf of recreation, that bare canvas
As matter-of-fact as the traffic and the day's noise."

The mountain stopped shaking; its body
Arched into its own contradiction, its enjoyment,
As far from us lights were put out, memories of boys and girls
Who walked here before the great change,

Before the air mirrored us,
Taking the opposite shape of our effort,
Its inseparable comment and corollary
But casting us further and further out.

Wha—what happened? You are with
The orange tree, so that its summer produce
Can go back to where we got it wrong, then drip gently
Into history, if it wants to. A page turned; we were

Just now floundering in the wind of its colossal death.
And whether it is Thursday, or the day is stormy,
With thunder and rain, or the birds attack each other,
We have rolled into another dream.

No use charging the barriers of that other:
It no longer exists. But you,
Gracious and growing thing, with those leaves like stars,
We shall soon give all our attention to you.

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Farm Implements and Rutabagas in a Landscape

The first of the undecoded messages read: "Popeye sits in thunder,
Unthought of. From that shoebox of an apartment,
From livid curtain's hue, a tanagram emerges: a country."
Meanwhile the Sea Hag was relaxing on a green couch: "How pleasant
To spend one's vacation *en la casa de Popeye*," she scratched
Her cleft chin's solitary hair. She remembered spinach

And was going to ask Wimpy if he had bought any spinach.
"M'love," he intercepted, "the plains are decked out in thunder
Today, and it shall be as you wish." He scratched
The part of his head under his hat. The apartment
Seemed to grow smaller. "But what if no pleasant
Inspiration plunge us now to the stars? *For this is my country*."

Suddenly they remembered how it was cheaper in the country.
Wimpy was thoughtfully cutting open a number 2 can of spinach
When the door opened and Swee'pea crept in. "How pleasant!"
But Swee'pea looked morose. A note was pinned to his bib. "Thunder
And tears are unavailing," it read. "Henceforth shall Popeye's apartment
Be but remembered space, toxic or salubrious, whole or scratched."

Olive came hurtling through the window; its geraniums scratched
Her long thigh. "I have news!" she gasped. "Popeye, forced as you know t
flee the country
One musty gusty evening, by the schemes of his wizened, duplicate father
jealous of the apartment
And all that it contains, myself and spinach
In particular, heaves bolts of loving thunder
At his own astonished becoming, rupturing the pleasant

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Arpeggio of our years. No more shall pleasant
Rays of the sun refresh your sense of growing old, nor the scratched
Tree-trunks and mossy foliage, only immaculate darkness and thunder."
She grabbed Swee'pea. "I'm taking the brat to the country."
"But you can't do that—he hasn't even finished his spinach,"
Urged the Sea Hag, looking fearfully around at the apartment.

But Olive was already out of earshot. Now the apartment
Succumbed to a strange new hush. "Actually it's quite pleasant
Here," thought the Sea Hag. "If this is all we need fear from spinach
Then I don't mind so much. Perhaps we could invite Alice the Goon over"
—she scratched
One dug pensively—"but Wimpy is such a country
Bumpkin, always burping like that." Minute at first, the thunder

Soon filled the apartment. It was domestic thunder,
The color of spinach. Popeye chuckled and scratched
His balls: it sure was pleasant to spend a day in the country.

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Kenneth Koch

The Interpretation of Dreams

I

You are my Sweetheart
Sang the tin can
I was sitting on a truck
As it rolled along
You are my Truck
Sang my Sweetheart
Somehow it was menacing
An ominous song
I hardly knew what to say I went into the truck
It was amazing
That autumn afternoon, when every affection came unsought
As from an unstoppered lute and a glass of campari
Was downed from a shimmering glass and quickly as if nothing
Could harm the eternal beaver any more. But a policeman of high reflection
Suddenly stood up for the traffic crossings' protection
And were we sad, lost in thought at our newfound abortionlessness
In stages, because of a green kerchief stuck in your pocket
As one asks What's the difference between that and a handkerchief? and
Between each stop and its parenthesis? Let's assume we have too much
And pound on the marble table top. It has always gone best that way
Yet you're thinking (I think) "Yet the hand falls off
And the streets of Paris will continue to go every which way.
No, in spite of your palaver
And a summertime gift for describing the rose
You will have to take me into another valley
Where reality is not affliction." Or if you did not think that all at once
Toward that our thoughts have been gathering. Whose omnibus is that parked outside the S. S. Rose

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With a Himalayan flagboy in the window of the car
Scratching his initials A.H., A.H., as the winter evening dies
And turns into a springtime fogbound morning? I was sleeping in the hay
When we awoke. One could just barely make out the sky. A truck raced past.
Then I realized where we were. It was potato season. And, Spiff! this season was to be our last
Before we dangled before tomatoes, hard red ones and yellow yummy
Tomatoes and huge hard pink ones which were brighter than the nose
Of Snow White in Walt Disney's fiction. I am going into slaveland
To help these tomatoes get free, but they come thumping
After. "Wait for us! Wait! You will see! It is impossible to serve us unless we are there!"
And the tomatoes turned into apples. I was wide awake. The cook said, "You are my Sweetheart."
And a band played "The Abortion of the Sleeper may be the Swan Song of the Sheep-Man's Heart."

2

Into this valley my sweetheart came
The tomatoes were hard as her nose
She was available exactly
Five minutes every afternoon
Then she took Snow White
Into the kidney parlor
She said "Snow White, be an actress!"
And Snow White implored the yellow movies
To be more reasonable about Al Capp
'He's a swell guy"
We know we know
But he's not purple anymore
A large picture flew through the sky
My Sweetheart put on it
'I am the Capostranni of the Rose"
And William Butler Yeats died
When Auden wrote the poem
About the deftness of the steamship

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Plying through the harbor
Is my Sweetheart's nose.

3

Meanwhile Snow White and her boyfriend
Have gone up into the mountains.
It is amazing what they will do for a game of bingo!
No! That is not what they are doing. Look!
They are making love! I didn't know that was allowed in the movies
In this country! But that must be what they are doing!
She is lying beneath him and every time his body rose
I saw her fingerprints gripping the dust like the U.S.S. Idaho
In an old story. Do you know the one of the Frightening Fidget?
Well, in this one old Doctor Barnose
Is riding along through Italy on a great white highway
Made of marshmallows, when some greensuited policemen come out
And make him stop to show his passport, which he had had made out of clothes
As a modern novelty, but they threw him in the purple prison,
Where like an Italianate tirade of grapejuice something exists to this day
Numbered among the aquanauts who saved this country
From being bombed by the submarines which I purchased you for my birthday
In one of my most powerful moods, on the Pomeranian coast.

4

The gasoline must come to a halt, as the great apple shipments have done.

The true Advisor to the lesser party will not permit the Eczema to come
Into the park of Dutiful Silence. This is an Order imposed by Law.

The Marlene Dietrich suitcases are not to be opened
Except by the pink hands of the Prelate in charge of the bombing.
(Cardinal Spellman, I am dreaming of you! I am seeing your plumpness insulted by bombs!
And then I am seeing the grass-green acne of the trends.)

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In charge of fishes Israel is put; in charge of Packaging, Summer.
(I am sorry, Winslow Homer, that you did not get this job,
And you, yearning seminarians of our Hungarian Pall Mall,
But it is a direct icing I get, and not a "forwarded," from the Divine.)

And now I think it is time to cut out Music.

5

The musicians are viciously bald. They will not listen to the music
Whether it is good or bad. They say, "Oklahoma has taken the best music.
And then Snow White. We have nothing left."
They laugh, the musicians, at their own sorrow.
But at least the music has stopped.
I hated the music, it was always resounding in the ears
Like a broken fiddle. I am glad you have imposed on them to stop.
It was of their own free will, like the other decisions
They have made, like which fish to have on Wednesday
And how to catch mackerel without a rod. I am tired now of "not
hearing" the music
In such a lively way. Can we go down to the harbor?
In the harbor everything was a bad job.
The courts were out of work and the community centers were filled with
people
Eating pastry-cakes shaped like sheets of music. "All those good pies," I said,
"Being wasted like a nuthouse." And I run rampant.
I rock around smashing everything I could find.
They had destroyed my darling and I was going to ruin them as well.
Then struck the clock. It was the time of the oyster and the octopus.
I walked out of the fishstore with a prayer.
The universe was ringing with a song.

6

Snow White had brought the music back.

7

The yoyo capitalists are filled
By the pastry which tyrants heat
On Mediterranean ovens.

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You now feel that you will never understand;
But it is about to open, becoming easy
As one may say "Ah!" at the sight of a pink island
Or a tremendous pink apple which is of a different kind
From every other apple one has ever tasted
And as Snow White
Who had an island pedigree in black and white
Came ravished when in colors.

A new hydrofoil has started
To invent the sea. And when the sea comes in
The birthday poem is finished and a nude start begins
On some fantastic island—"Fantastic island?" I'll never question
you any more.
But sexuality is not all, even though it is beautiful
As Moravian gusts. One also needs a spellbinding heart
And a lethal spelling book, which gives the Seminole report.

"I'm in love with apples,"
The old seminarian says.
But the young Arethusa knows better:
"Alpheus is in love with me."

8

Oh American homerun hitter! your balls! your balls!
They are sailing over our trees
And when they land
We feel we pick up a killer
Oh American homerun hitter
Dressed in white tie and tails!

And you smote your guitar
Good cousin Jute with a loud report.
"This is America! This is the Capitalist country
Where witnesses write on the trees
And black meets white
In a catapult, blast, and explosion. It is not Nude Island."

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'So what?" said the caterpillar, and
'So what?" whispered the trees. From every direction the
"so-whatters" came running
To compel him to retain his distance.
The porkchop and the shark said
"If you come too close to us, we die.
Remember the speech of the living.
And welcome back to Thorax Island."

Then a picture of Snow White completely blocked out the sky.

9

And I was with you again
But we were going in different directions.
We met and started to go in the same direction.
Then once more our paths crossed and we met again
Under the believable blue of a traffic light where we had first met
The village coconut who had forbidden our meetings
But now we meet all the time.
"You go this way and I'll go that,
And when we head back we will meet
And declare our love."

This is the foundation of the emotions.
The sky is our parade ground and our glove.
The fish in the bay are the slaves of their time and not of art
But somehow our emotions can become their emotions.
This is the beginning of Realism. This is the end of the ideal.
This is the degree of front and back.

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The Art of Fiction XL

Vladimir Nabokov

An Interview

Vladimir Nabokov lives with his wife Vera in the Montreux-Palace Hotel in Montreux, Switzerland, a resort city on Lake Geneva which was a favorite of Russian aristocrats of the last century. They dwell in a connected series of hotel rooms which, like their houses and apartments in the United States, seem impermanent, places of exile. Their rooms include one used for visits by their son Dmitri, and another, the chambre de debarras, *where various items are deposited—Turkish and Japanese editions of Lolita, other books, sporting equipment, an American flag.*

Nabokov arises early in the morning and works. He does his writing on filing cards which are gradually copied, expanded and rearranged until they become his novels. During the warm season in Montreux he likes to take the sun and swim at a pool in a garden near the hotel. His appearance at sixty-eight is heavy, slow and powerful. He is easily turned to both amusement and annoyance, but prefers the former. His wife, an unequivocally devoted collaborator, is vigilant over him, writing his letters, taking care of business, occasionally even interrupting him when she feels he is saying the wrong thing. She is an exceptionally goodlooking, trim and sober-eyed woman. The Nabokovs still go off on frequent butterfly-hunting trips, though the distances they travel are limited by the fact that they dislike flying.

The interviewer had sent ahead a number of questions. When he arrived at the Montreux-Palace, he found an envelope waiting for him—the questions had been shaken up and transformed into an interview. A few questions and answers were added later.

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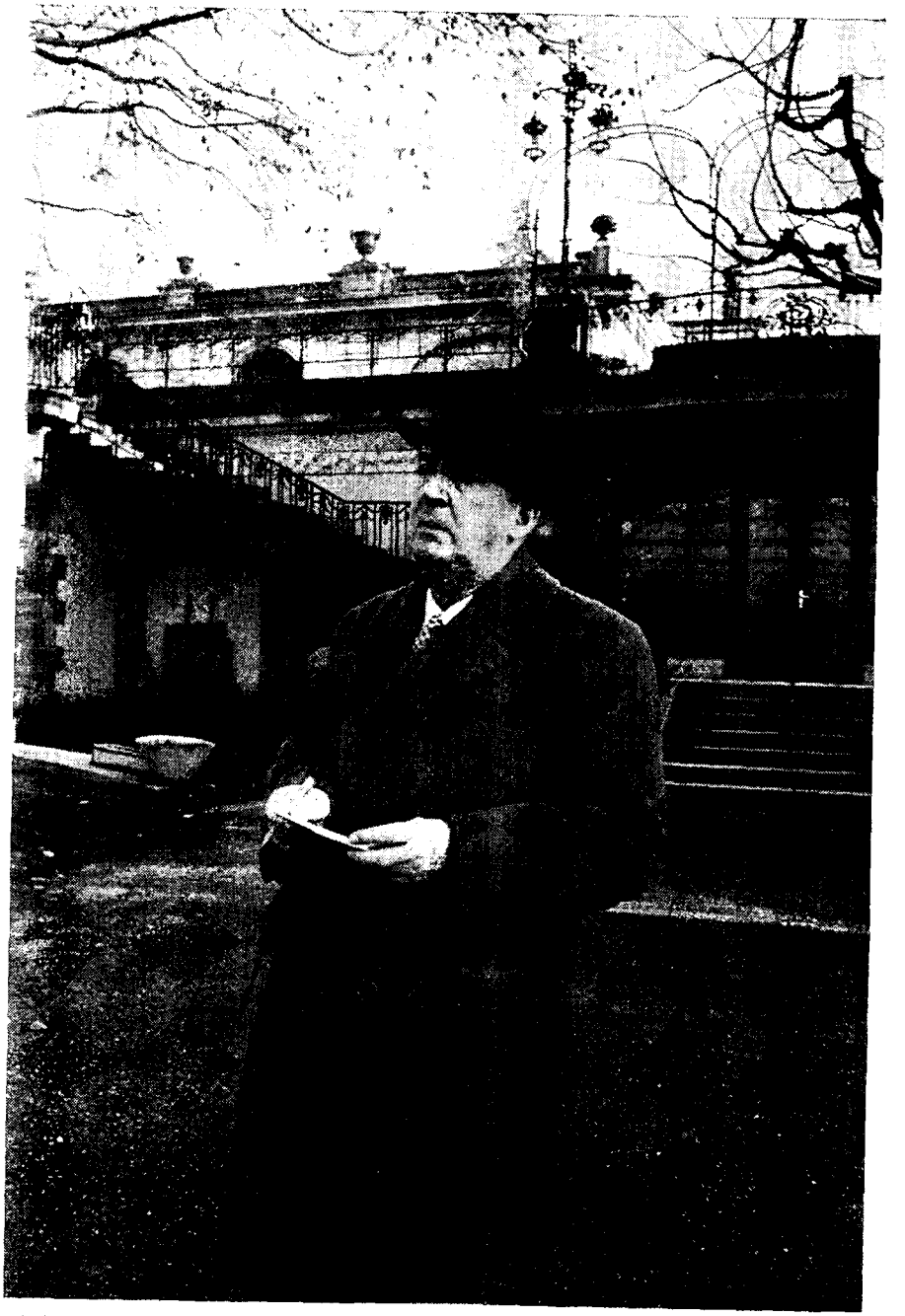

Vladimir Nabokov in Montreux.

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In accordance with Nabokov's wishes, all answers are given as he wrote them down. He claims that he needs to write his responses because of his unfamiliarity with English; this is a constant serio-comic form of teasing. He speaks with a dramatic Cambridge accent, very slightly nuanced by an occasional Russian pronunciation. Spoken English is, in fact, no hazard to him. Misquotation, however, is a menace. There is no doubt that Nabokov feels as a tragic loss the conspiracy of history which deprived him of his native Russia, and which brought him in middle life to doing his life's work in a language which is not that of his first dreams. However, his frequent apologies for his grasp of English clearly belong in the context of Nabokov's special mournful joking: he means it, he does not mean it, he is grieving for his loss, he is outraged if anyone criticizes his style, he pretends to be just a poor lonely foreigner, he is as American "as April in Arizona."

Nabokov is now at work on a long novel which explores the mysteries and ambiguities of time. When he speaks of this book, his voice and gaze are those of a delighted and bemused young poet eager to get to the task.

INTERVIEWER

Good morning. Let me ask forty-odd questions.

NABOKOV

Good morning. I am ready.

INTERVIEWER

Your sense of the immorality of the relationship between Humbert Humbert and Lolita is very strong. In Hollywood and New York, however, relationships are frequent between men of forty and girls very little older than Lolita. They marry—to no particular public outrage; rather, public cooing.

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NABOKOV

No, it is not *my* sense of the immorality of the Humbert Humbert-Lolita relationship that is strong; it is Humbert's sense. *He* cares, I do not. *I* do not give a damn for public morals, in America or elsewhere. And, anyway, cases of men in their forties marrying girls in their teens or early twenties have no bearing on Lolita whatever. Humbert was fond of "little girls"—not simply "young girls." Nymphets are girl-children, not starlets and "sex kittens." Lolita was twelve, not eighteen, when Humbert met her. You may remember that by the time she is fourteen, he refers to her as his "aging mistress."

INTERVIEWER

One critic (Pryce-Jones) has said about you that "his feelings are like no one else's." Does this make sense to you? Or does it mean that you know your feelings better than others know theirs? Or that you have discovered yourself at other levels? Or simply that your history is unique?

NABOKOV

I do not recall that article; but if a critic makes such a statement, it must surely mean that he has explored the feelings of literally millions of people, in at least three countries, before reaching his conclusion. If so, I am a rare fowl indeed. If, on the other hand, he has merely limited himself to quizzing members of his family or club, his statement cannot be discussed seriously.

INTERVIEWER

Another critic has written that your "worlds are static. They may become tense with obsession, but they do not break apart like the worlds of everyday reality." Do you agree? Is there a static quality in your view of things?

NABOKOV

Whose "reality"? "Everyday" where? Let me suggest that the very term "everyday reality" is utterly static since it

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presupposes a situation that is permanently observable, essentially objective, and universally known. I suspect you have invented that expert on "everyday reality." Neither exists.

INTERVIEWER

He does *(names him)*. A third critic has said that you "diminish" your characters "to the point where they become ciphers in a cosmic farce." I disagree; Humbert, while comic, retains a touching and insistent quality—that of the spoiled artist.

NABOKOV

I would put it differently: Humbert Humbert is a vain and cruel wretch who manages to appear "touching." That epithet, in its true, tear-iridized sense, can only apply to my poor little girl. Besides, how can I "diminish" to the level of ciphers, etcetera, characters that I have invented myself? One can "diminish" a biographee, but not an eidolon.

INTERVIEWER

E. M. Forster speaks of his major characters sometimes taking over and dictating the course of his novels. Has this ever been a problem for you, or are you in complete command?

NABOKOV

My knowledge of Mr. Forster's works is limited to one novel which I dislike; and anyway it was not he who fathered that trite little whimsy about characters getting out of hand; it is as old as the quills, although of course one sympathizes with *his* people if they try to wriggle out of that trip to India or wherever he takes them. My characters are galley slaves.

INTERVIEWER

Clarence Brown of Princeton has pointed out striking similarities in your work. He refers to you as "extremely repetitious" and that in wildly different ways you are in essence saying the same thing. He speaks of fate being the "muse of Na-

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bokov." Are you consciously aware of "repeating yourself," or to put it another way, that you strive for a conscious unity to your shelf of books?

NABOKOV

I do not think I have seen Clarence Brown's essay, but he may have something there. Derivative writers seem versatile because they imitate many others, past and present. Artistic originality has only its own self to copy.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think literary criticism is at all purposeful? Either in general, or specifically about your own books? Is it ever instructive?

NABOKOV

The purpose of a critique is to say something about a book the critic has or has not read. Criticism can be instructive in the sense that it gives readers, including the author of the book, some information about the critic's intelligence, or honesty, or both.

INTERVIEWER

And the function of the editor? Has one ever had literary advice to offer?

NABOKOV

By "editor" I suppose you mean proofreader. Among these I have known limpid creatures of limitless tact and tenderness who would discuss with me a semicolon as if it were a point of honor—which, indeed, a point of art often is. But I have also come across a few pompous avuncular brutes who would attempt to "make suggestions" which I countered with a thunderous "stet!"

INTERVIEWER

Are you a lepidopterist, stalking your victims? If so, doesn't your laughter startle them?

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NABOKOV

On the contrary, it lulls them into the state of torpid security which an insect experiences when mimicking a dead leaf. Though by no means an avid reader of reviews dealing with my own stuff, I happen to remember the essay by a young lady who attempted to find entomological symbols in my fiction. The essay might have been amusing had she known something about Lepidoptera. Alas, she revealed complete ignorance and the muddle of terms she employed proved to be only jarring and absurd.

INTERVIEWER

How would you define your alienation from the so-called "White Russian" refugees?

NABOKOV

Well, historically I am a "White Russian" myself, since all Russians who left Russia as my family did in the first years of the Bolshevist tyranny because of their opposition to it were and remained "White Russians" in the large sense. But these refugees were split into as many social fractions and political factions as was the entire nation. I do not mix with "black-hundred" White Russians and do not mix with the so-called "bolshevizans," that is "pinks." On the other hand, I have friends among intellectual Constitutional Monarchists as well as among intellectual Social Revolutionaries. My father was an old-fashioned liberal, and I do not mind being labeled an old-fashioned liberal too.

INTERVIEWER

How would you define your alienation from present-day Russia?

NABOKOV

As a deep distrust of the phony thaw now advertised. As a constant awareness of unredeemable iniquities. As a complete indifference to all that moves a patriotic Sovetski man of today. As the keen satisfaction of having discerned as early as

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1918 (nineteen eighteen) the *meshchantsvo* (petty bourgeois smugness, Philistine essence) of Leninism.

INTERVIEWER

How do you now regard the poets Blok and Mandelstam and others who were writing in the days before you left Russia?

NABOKOV

I read them in my boyhood, more than a half century ago. Ever since that time I have remained passionately fond of Blok's lyrics. His long pieces are weak, and the famous *The Twelve* is dreadful, self-consciously couched in a phony "primitive" tone, with a pink cardboard Jesus Christ glued on at the end. As to Mandelstam, I also knew him by heart, but he gave me a less fervent pleasure. Today, through the prism of a tragic fate, his poetry seems greater than it actually is. I note incidentally that professors of literature still assign these two poets to different schools. There is only one school: that of talent.

INTERVIEWER

I know your work has been read and is attacked in the Soviet Union. How would you feel about a Soviet edition of your work?

NABOKOV

Oh, they are welcome to my work. As a matter of fact, the Radio Liberty Committee is bringing out my *Invitation to a Beheading* in the original Russian of 1935, and a New York publisher (Phaedra) is printing my Russian translation of *Lolita*. I am sure the Soviet Government will be happy to admit officially a novel that contains a prophecy of Hitler's regime, and a novel that condemns bitterly the American system of motels.

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever had contact with Soviet citizens? Of what sort?

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NABOKOV

I have practically no contact with them though I did once agree, in the early thirties or late twenties, to meet—out of sheer curiosity—an agent from Bolshevist Russia who was trying hard to get émigré writers and artists to return to the fold. He had a double name, Lebedev something, and had written a novelette entitled "Chocolate," and I thought I might have some sport with him. I asked him would I be permitted to write freely and would I be able to leave Russia if I did not like it there. He said that I would be so busy liking it there that I would have no time to dream of going abroad again. I would, he said, be perfectly free to choose any of the many themes Soviet Russia bountifully allows a writer to use, such as farms, factories, forests in Fakistan—oh, lots of fascinating subjects. I said farms, etcetera, bored me, and my wretched seducer soon gave up. He had better luck with the composer Prokofiev.

INTERVIEWER

Do you consider yourself an American?

NABOKOV

Yes, I do. I am as American as April in Arizona. The flora, the fauna, the air of the Western states are my links with Asiatic and Arctic Russia. Of course, I owe too much to the Russian language and landscape to be emotionally involved in, say, American regional literature, or Indian dances, or pumpkin pie on a spiritual plane; but I do feel a suffusion of warm, light-hearted pride when I show my green USA passport at European frontiers. Crude criticism of American affairs offends and distresses me. In home politics I am strongly anti-segregationist. In foreign policy, I am definitely on the government's side. And when in doubt, I always follow the simple method of choosing that line of conduct which may be the most displeasing to the Reds and the Russells.

INTERVIEWER

Is there a community of which you consider yourself a part?

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NABOKOV

Not really. I can mentally collect quite a large number of individuals whom I am fond of but they would form a very disparate and discordant group if gathered in real life, on a real island. Otherwise, I would say that I am fairly comfortable in the company of American intellectuals who have read my books.

INTERVIEWER

What is your opinion of the academic world as milieu for the creative writer? Could you speak specifically of the value or detriment of your teaching at Cornell?

NABOKOV

A first-rate college library with a comfortable campus around it is a fine milieu for a writer. There is of course the problem of fellow readers. I remember how once, between terms, not at Cornell, a student brought a transistor set with him into the reading room. He managed to state that 1) he was playing "classical" music; that 2) he was doing it "softly"; and that 3) "there were not many readers around in summer." I was there, a one-man multitude.

INTERVIEWER

Would you describe your relationship with the contemporary literary community? With Edmund Wilson, Mary McCarthy, your magazine editors and book publishers?

NABOKOV

The only time I ever collaborated with any writer was when I translated with Edmund Wilson Pushkin's *Mozart and Salieri* for the *New Republic* twenty-five years ago, a rather paradoxical recollection in view of his making such a fool of himself last year when he had the audacity of questioning my understanding of *Eugene Onegin*. Mary McCarthy, on the other hand, has been very kind to me recently in the same *New Republic*, although I do think she added quite a bit of her own angelica to the pale fire of Kinbote's plum pudding. I prefer

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not to mention here my relationship with Girodias, but I have answered in *Evergreen* his scurvy article in the Olympia anthology. Otherwise, I am on excellent terms with all my publishers. My warm friendship with Catharine White and Bill Maxwell of *The New Yorker* is something the most arrogant author cannot evoke without gratitude and delight.

INTERVIEWER

Could you say something of your work habits? Do you write to a preplanned chart? Do you jump from one section to another, or do you move from the beginning through to the end?

NABOKOV

The pattern of the thing precedes the thing. I fill in the gaps of the crossword at any spot I happen to choose. These bits I write on index cards until the novel is done. My schedule is flexible but I am rather particular about my instruments: lined Bristol cards and well sharpened, not too hard, pencils capped with erasers.

INTERVIEWER

Is there a particular picture of the world which you wish to develop? The past is very present for you, even in a novel of the "future," such as *Bend Sinister*. Are you a "nostalgist"? In what time would you prefer to live?

NABOKOV

In the coming days of silent planes and graceful aircycles, and cloudless silvery skies, and a universal system of padded underground roads to which trucks shall be relegated like Morlocks. As to the past, I would not mind retrieving from various corners of spacetime certain lost comforts, such as baggy trousers and long, deep bathtubs.

INTERVIEWER

You know, you do not have to answer *all* my Kinbote-like questions.

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NABOKOV

It would never do to start skipping the tricky ones. Let us continue.

INTERVIEWER

Besides writing novels, what do you, or would you, like most to do?

NABOKOV

Oh, hunting butterflies, of course, and studying them. The pleasures and rewards of literary inspiration are nothing beside the rapture of discovering a new organ under the microscope or an undescribed species on a mountainside in Iran or Peru. It is not improbable that had there been no revolution in Russia, I would have devoted myself entirely to lepidopterology and never written any novels at all.

INTERVIEWER

What is most characteristic of poshlust in contemporary writing? Are there temptations for you in the sin of poshlust? Have you ever fallen?

NABOKOV

"Poshlust," or in a better transliteration *poshlost*, has many nuances and evidently I have not described them clearly enough in my little book on Gogol, if you think one can ask anybody if he is tempted by *poshlost*. Corny trash, vulgar clichés, Philistinism in all its phases, imitations of imitations, bogus profundities, crude, moronic and dishonest pseudo-literature—these are obvious examples. Now, if we want to pin down *poshlost* in contemporary writing we must look for it in Freudian symbolism, moth-eaten mythologies, social comment, humanistic messages, political allegories, overconcern with class or race, and the journalistic generalities we all know. *Poshlost* speaks in such concepts as "America is no better than Russia" or "We all share in Germany's guilt." The flowers of *poshlost* bloom in such phrases and terms as "The moment of

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truth," "charisma," "existential" (used seriously), "dialogue" (as applied to political talks between nations) and "vocabulary" (as applied to a dauber). Listing in one breath Auschwitz, Hiroshima and Vietnam is seditious *poshlost*. Belonging to a very select club (which sports *one* Jewish name—that of the treasurer) is genteel *poshlost*. Hack reviews are frequently *poshlost*, that is simple, but it also lurks in certain highbrow essays. *Poshlost* calls Mr. Blank a great poet, and Mr. Bluff a great novelist. One of *poshlost's* favorite breeding places has always been the Art Exhibition; there it is produced by so-called sculptors working with the tools of wreckers, building crankshaft cretins of stainless steel, zen stereos, polystyrene stinkbirds, objects *trouvés* in latrines, cannon balls, canned balls. There we admire the *gabinetti* wallpatterns of so-called abstract artists, Freudian surrealism, roric smudges and Rorschach blots—all of it as corny in its own right as the academic "September Morns" and "Florentine Flowergirls" of half a century ago.

Of course, everybody has his *bête noire*, his black pet, in the series. Mine is that airline ad: the snack served by an obsequious wench to a young couple—she eyeing ecstatically the cucumber canapé, he admiring wistfully the hostess. And, of course, *Death in Venice*. You see the range.

INTERVIEWER

Are there contemporary writers you follow with great pleasure?

NABOKOV

There are several such writers, but I shall not name them. Anonymous pleasure hurts nobody.

INTERVIEWER

Do you follow some with great pain?

NABOKOV

No. Many accepted authors simply do not exist for me. Their names are engraved on empty graves, their books are

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dummies, they are complete nonentities insofar as my taste in reading is concerned. Brecht, Faulkner, Camus, many others, mean absolutely nothing to me, and I must fight a suspicion of conspiracy against my brain when I see blandly accepted as "great literature" by critics and fellow authors Lady Chatterley's copulations or the pretentious nonsense of Mr. Pound, that total fake. I note he has replaced Dr. Schweitzer in some homes.

INTERVIEWER

As an admirer of Borges and Joyce you seem to share their pleasure in teasing the reader with tricks and puns and puzzles. What do you think the relationship should be between reader and author?

NABOKOV

I do not recollect any puns in Borges but then I read him only in translation. Anyway, his delicate little tales and miniature Minotaurs have nothing in common with Joyce's great machines. Nor do I find many puzzles in that most lucid of novels, *Ulysses*. On the other hand, I detest *Punnigans Wake* in which a cancerous growth of fancy word-tissue hardly redeems the dreadful joviality of the folklore and the easy, too easy, allegory.

INTERVIEWER

What have you learned from Joyce?

NABOKOV

Nothing.

INTERVIEWER

Oh, come.

NABOKOV

James Joyce has not influenced me in any manner whatsoever. My first brief contact with *Ulysses* was around 1920 at Cambridge University, when a friend, Peter Mrozovski, who

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had brought a copy from Paris, chanced to read to me, as he stomped up and down my digs, one or two spicy passages from Molly's monologue, which, *entre nous soit dit*, is the weakest chapter in the book. Only fifteen years later, when I was already well formed as a writer and reluctant to learn or unlearn anything, I read Ulysses and liked it enormously. I am indifferent to *Finnigans Wake* as I am to all regional literature written in dialect—even if it be the dialect of genius.

INTERVIEWER

Aren't you doing a book about James Joyce?

NABOKOV

But not only about him. What I intend to do is publish a number of twenty-page essays on several works—*Ulysses*, *Madame Bovary*, Kafka's *Transformation*, *Don Quixote* and others—all based on my Cornell and Harvard lectures. I remember with delight tearing apart *Don Quixote*, a cruel and crude old book, before six hundred students in Memorial Hall, much to the horror and embarrassment of some of my more conservative colleagues.

INTERVIEWER

What about other influences? Pushkin?

NABOKOV

In a way—no more than, say, Tolstoy or Turgenev were influenced by the pride and purity of Pushkin's art.

INTERVIEWER

Gogol?

NABOKOV

I was careful *not* to learn anything from him. As a teacher, he is dubious and dangerous. At his worst, as in his Ukranian stuff, he is a worthless writer; at his best, he is incomparable and inimitable.

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The editorial board of Mesures, *1937. Left to right: Sylvia Beach, Barbara Church, Vladimir Nabokov, Adrienne Monnier, Germaine Paulhan, Henry Church, Henri Michaux, Michel Leiris and standing behind him, Jean Paulhan.*

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INTERVIEWER

Anyone else?

NABOKOV

H. G. Wells, a great artist, was my favorite writer when I was a boy. *The Passionate Friends*, *Ann Veronica*, *The Time Machine*, *The Country of the Blind*, all these stories are far better than anything Bennett, or Conrad or, in fact, any of Wells' contemporaries could produce. His sociological cogitations can be safely ignored, of course, but his romances and fantasias are superb. There was an awful moment at dinner in our St. Petersburg house one night, when Zinaïda Vengerov, his translator, informed Wells, with a toss of her head: "You know, *my* favorite work of yours is *The Lost World*." "She means the war the Martians lost," said my father quickly.

INTERVIEWER

Did you learn from your students at Cornell? Was the experience purely a financial one? Did teaching teach you anything valuable?

NABOKOV

My method of teaching precluded genuine contact with my students. At best, they regurgitated a few bits of my brain during examinations. Every lecture I delivered had been carefully, lovingly handwritten and typed out, and I leisurely read it out in class, sometimes stopping to rewrite a sentence and sometimes repeating a paragraph—a mnemonic prod which, however, seldom provoked any change in the rhythm of wrists taking it down. I welcomed the few shorthand experts in my audience, hoping they would communicate the information they stored to their less fortunate comrades. Vainly I tried to replace my appearances at the lectern by taped records to be played over the college radio. On the other hand, I deeply enjoyed the chuckle of appreciation in this or that warm spot of the lecture hall at this or that point of my lecture. My best reward comes from those former students of mine who ten or fifteen years later write to me to say that

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they now understand what I wanted of them when I taught them to visualize Emma Bovary's mistranslated hairdo or the arrangement of rooms in the Samsa household or the two homosexuals in *Anna Karenina*. I do not know if I learned anything from teaching but I know I amassed an invaluable amount of exciting information in analyzing a dozen novels for my students. My salary as you happen to know was not exactly a princely one.

INTERVIEWER

Is there anything you would care to say about the collaboration your wife has given you?

NABOKOV

She presided as adviser and judge over the making of my first fiction in the early twenties. I have read to her all my stories and novels at least twice; and she has reread them all when typing them and correcting proofs and checking translations into several languages. One day in 1950, at Ithaca, New York, she was responsible for stopping me and urging delay and second thoughts as, beset with technical difficulties and doubts, I was carrying the first chapters of *Lolita* to the garden incinerator.

INTERVIEWER

What is your relation to the translations of your books?

NABOKOV

In the case of languages my wife and I know or can read—English, Russian, French and to a certain extent German and Italian—the system is a strict checking of every sentence. In the case of Japanese or Turkish versions, I try not to imagine the disasters that probably bespatter every page.

INTERVIEWER

What are your plans for future work?

NABOKOV

I am writing a new novel but of this I cannot speak. Another project I have been nursing for some time is the publication of the complete screenplay of *Lolita* that I made for Ku-

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brick. Although there are just enough borrowings from it in his version to justify my legal position as author of the script, the final product is only a blurred skimpy glimpse of the marvelous picture I imagined and set down scene by scene during the six months I worked in a Los Angeles villa. I do not wish to imply that Kubrick's film is mediocre; in its own right, it is first-rate, but it is not what I wrote. A tinge of *poshlost* is often given by the cinema to the novel it distorts and coarsens in its crooked glass. Kubrick, I think, avoided this fault in his version, but I shall never understand why he did not follow my directions and dreams. It is a great pity; but at least I shall be able to have people read my *Lolita* play in its original form.

INTERVIEWER

If you had the choice of one and only one book by which you would be remembered, which one would it be?

NABOKOV

The one I am writing or rather dreaming of writing. Actually, I shall be remembered by *Lolita* and my work on *Eugene Onegin*.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel you have any conspicuous or secret flaw as a writer?

NABOKOV

The absence of a natural vocabulary. An odd thing to confess, but it is true. Of the two instruments in my possession, one—my native tongue—I can no longer use, and this not only because I lack a Russian audience, but also because the excitement of verbal adventure in the Russian medium has faded away gradually after I turned to English in 1940. My English, this second instrument I have always had, is however a stiffish, artificial thing, which may be all right for describing a sunset or an insect, but which cannot conceal poverty of syntax and paucity of domestic diction when I need the shortest road between warehouse and shop. An old Rolls Royce is not always preferable to a plain jeep.

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INTERVIEWER

What do you think about the contemporary competitive ranking of writers?

NABOKOV

Yes, I have noticed that in this respect our professional bookreviewers are veritable bookmakers. Who's in, who's out, and where are the snows of yesteryear... All very amusing. I am a little sorry to be left out. Nobody can decide if I am a middle-aged American writer or an old Russian writer —or an ageless international freak.

INTERVIEWER

What is your great regret in your career?

NABOKOV

That I did not come earlier to America. I would have liked to have lived in New York in the thirties. Had my Russian novels been translated then, they might have provided a shock and a lesson for pro-Soviet enthusiasts.

INTERVIEWER

Are there significant disadvantages to your present fame?

NABOKOV

Lolita is famous, not I. I am an obscure, doubly obscure, novelist with an unpronounceable name.

—HERBERT GOLD

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Tom Clark

You

I

The door behind me was you
and the radiance, there like
an electric train wreck in your eye
after a horrible evening of waiting outside places in the rain for you to com
only to
find all of them, two I know, the rest scullions, swimming around you
in that smoky crowded room like a fishbowl
I escaped from, running away from you and my André Breton
dream of cutting your breasts off with a trowel
and what does that matter to them or to you now, but just wait it's still earl
to the children embroidered in the rug, who seem to be setting up siege
engines under a tree house full of midgets who look like you.
Where are you in this sky of new blue
deltas I see in the drapery, and your new friends wearing bamboo singlet
what are they doing down there in the moat waving tridents like stalks
of corn?
Me, I'll be happy to see their blood spilled all over the bedspread
pavilions of your hands as an example. If you come home right now I'll
scrunch your hat
between my thighs like a valentine before you have time to wipe them.

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II

You are bright, tremendous, wow.
But it is the hour of one from whom the horrible tremendousness
Of youth is about to depart.
The boats are ready. The air is soft and you perhaps nearby
Do pass, saying "I am for you."
This is as much as "everything is great."
But desperation builds up all the time.
Life is nothing
more to me
Strapped at the bottom
of the throat
Than majesty, I think. You are arduous as that
Ashtray. Swallow me! Since
Your hands are full of streets
And I walk out upon the streets
And I think the girls are better looking, vicious, cool
And the men are flying kites and newsprint
Gets on my arms. I enter rooms—
Wild my steps like an automaton's—
Where batons are linked into some residue.
A gull is eating some garbage.
The sky is an old tomato-can, I think.
I buy a newspaper and begin to walk back.
Smells torture the kites like gulls. Wild gulls, and
It's the tremendous sky of survival.
Few things are still visible to me. Baseball
Withholds the tremors. They fall, so
I drag you down and
You are akimbo as I stick it in
And everything is thunderous accordion April, great,
Risen from palms and hypnotism. I run home
And dip my coffee in bread, and eat some of it.

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III

Today I get this letter from you and the sun
buckles a mist falls over our villas
with a hideous organic slush like the music of Lawrence Welk
I lay in bed all day, asleep, and like some nocturnal
beast. And get your salutation among the torn green numbers
in the sky over the council houses. And see your eyes when
  the retired pensioners pass
me by the abandoned railway station—this is not nothing, it is not
  the hymn
of an age of bankrobbers or heraldic days but it is to sing
with complete gaiety until your heart freaks. I love you.
  And go down amid the sycamores to
summer. Wandering by the lake any way
  seems lovely, grand, the moon
is a gland in the thigh. Tumble and twinkle as on the golf course
apparel lifts. And a door is opened to
an owl. It is snowing, and you are here on the bed with me
and it is raining, and I am as full of frets as a guitar or a curtain
and I am singing, as I sponge up the cat place. You
  are heaped
the word reminds me of Abydos and spinach. A curtain
of belief keeps me from the tombs
of imagery. I love you, I'd like to go.

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IV

the chords knotted together like insane nouns Dante
you are in bed in the dark copula you
of the musical phrase a few star birds sing in the branches
their voices are tangled not high
now all of them are dark and some move you
were a word, in the wood of my life
where the leaves are words, some of them fucking
in obscurity their clasping is terrible and brusque
pain birds ache thru them and some
are lighter and seem to suggest less
of death than of a viola da gamba player these
birds sweep past in the forest
of my hands on your chest, as we move
out on the glowing sea of the tropics on an ice pack, you,

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V (Hölderlin)

O Earth mother, who consents to everything, who forgives everything
don't hide like this and tell

Her Power is sweetened in these rays, the Earth before her
conceals the children
of her breast in her cloak, meanwhile we feel her,

and the days to come announce
that much time has passed and often one has felt
a heart grow for you inside his chest
They have guessed, the Ancients, the old and pious Patriarchs,
and in the secret they are, without even knowing it,
blessed
in the twisted chamber, for you, the silent men
but still more, the hearts, and those you have named Amor,
or have given obscure names, Earth, for one is shamed
to name his inmost heart, and from the start however man
when he finds greatness in himself and if the Most High permits,
he names it, this which belongs to him, and by its proper name
and you are it, and it seems
to me I hear the Father say
to you honor is granted from now on
and you must receive songs in its name,
and you must, while he is distant and old Eternity
becomes more and more hidden every day,
take his place in front of mortals, and since
you will bear and raise children for him, his wish
is to send anew and direct toward you men's lives
when you recognize him but this
directive which he inscribes in me is the rose
Pure sister, where will I get hold, when it is winter, of these
flowers, so as to weave the inhabitants of heaven crowns
It will be
as if the spirit of life passed out of me,
because for the heavenly gods these signs
of love are flowers in a desert I search for them, you are hidden

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Tony Towle

Sunrise: Ode to Frank O'Hara

The gulls glide, in 1939, into the bonus of another country,
the balloons and machinery of all the Europes and Americas,
a hundred million words at ease in the river,
rising as I think about myself,
and in the history of my ears making a beginning of the frontier.

Ah the complete bunker of the earth and its dirt flying up,
across our view at the peak of the centuries,
pauses and silence as subtle as the wine of Bordeaux, and as words
coming time after time before the vigilance of your dizzying
indulgence.

An incredible weight hangs today from my evasions,
you, and my biography which gets a little endless,
your immortal heart departing endlessly in the crisis,
slowly to be clear, and quickly to be interesting,
as we stay in the tonic of the bad air.

So what is the distinction of the river drawing you forward,
away from the restiveness of a vast American poetry
which you revealed with an unfathomable love.
You will be with the few of the past great enough to talk to,
as the remainder of this century of poetry begins to suffer,
and your work will burst our silence of unbearable memory.

August and then December will close the century
O air of your dreams descending on my day off.

12/66–3/67

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Philip Whalen

The Garden

The landlady's wearing her OLD WOMAN costume—
Shirakawa head-rag, blue droopy bloomers,
White balloon-sleeve apron top,
Sweeps dead leaves off the moss
Twig broom as drawn for Grimm's fairy tale picture
stage prop for the Nō play TAKASAGO
Old pine lady sweeps the leaves
Old Sumiyoshi pine husband calls her to the telephone.

*****

Now he's joined her in the garden
Dark blue raw silk kimono, sleeveless jacket brown wadded silk
wooden geta
Another *märchen* broom instead of the rake
He knows the songs, I've heard him practicing
They make the work easier, life with the old woman
temporarily a pleasure

*****

I thought when I first saw her out there months ago she was
Some hired *o-ba-san*, one of those old ladies who do a third of
the work that's done in this country
Later I walked through the yard and saw it was the landlady
and her daughter...
An amusement, I thought, Marie Antoinette milking the cow,
playing at work

*****

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They sweep the shrubs and bushes, too,
Old man has an elegant whiskbroom, a giant shaving brush
Gets rid of dust and spiders, leaf by leaf
Now this half sunny smoky October morning dream
Is also TAKASAGO play, meeting of two spirits, happy in
old age,
Silent giant pine trees from opposite sides of the island
Good luck at weddings, good news at the Kanze box office.

24:X:66

N.B. The Kanze Nō Theater is still operating in Kyoto, five hundred years after its foundation. The Nō of TAKASAGO is still performed there to great applause. A part of the play is sometimes read during Japanese wedding ceremonies. There are several translations of this play into English.

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LOUIS PHILIPPE TO MIOCENE

GIANFRANCO BARUCHELLO

As a colonel in the revolutionary army he fought at Valmy and Jemappes, 1792. It was part of the Tertiary period of the Cenozoic, or Recent, era;

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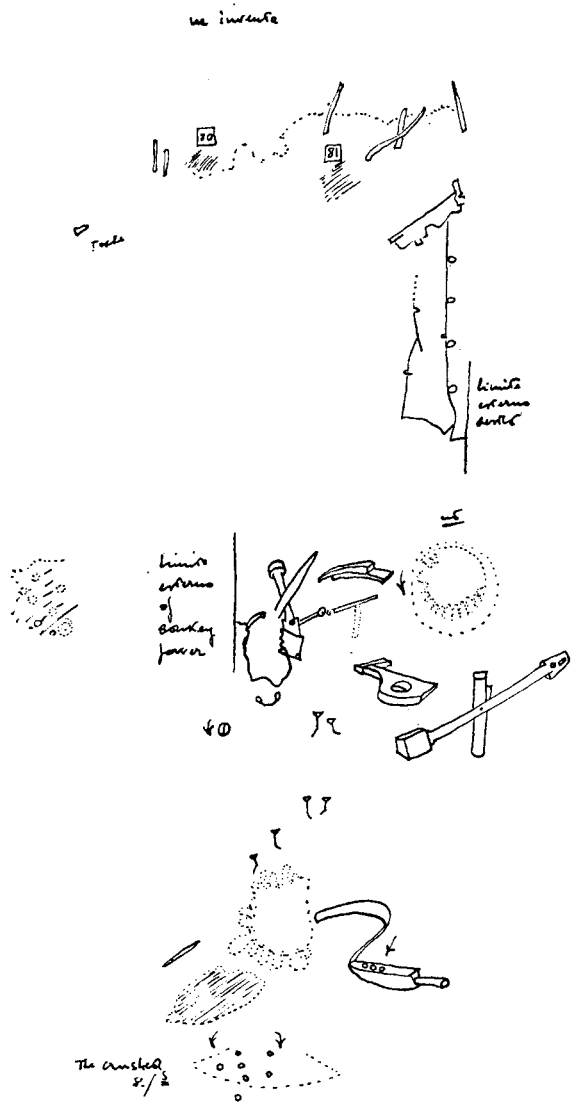
BLINDFOLDED



The dominant and official language in Manchuria is Mandarin, the northern dialect of Peking or its variant and simplified form Kuo-yü - Pai-hua, a colloquial form, is often used for general intercommunication

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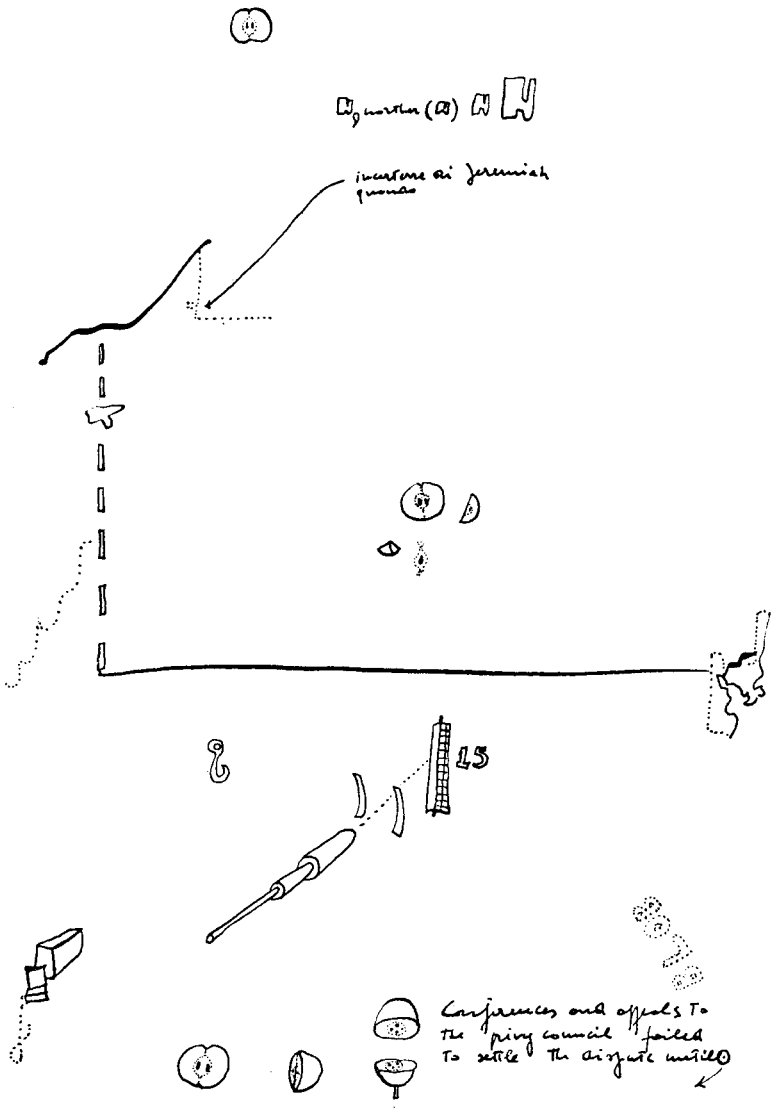
inscription at Jeremiah gunnis
15
Conferences and appeals to the privy council failed to settle the dispute until
a compromise between the Colverts and the Penns resulted in the appointment of Mason & Dixon to trace the boundary, which was ratified in 1769
Delaware
Pennsylvania
Maryland
1792/1872
Lowell
NO mark
with dome

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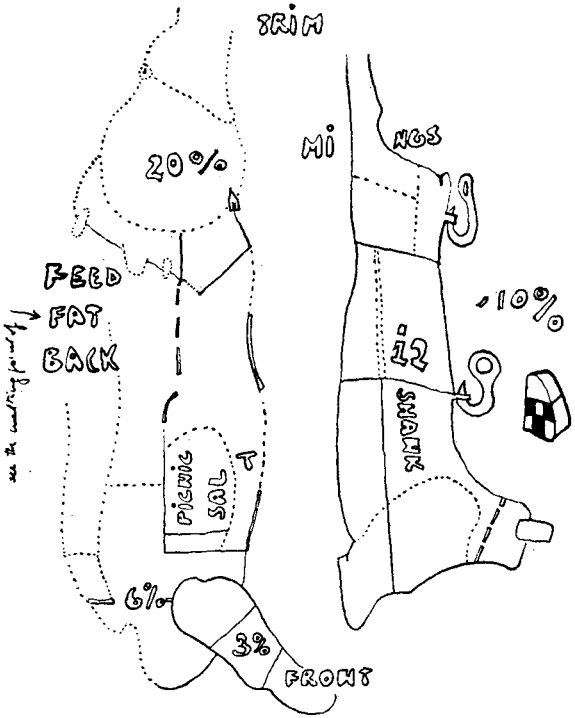
All meat contains fat.

YOUNGER AND

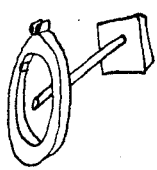


connective tissue consists primarily of the proteins collagen and elastin.

52.1/4 LEG
17.4 LOIN
25.- CHUCK

such effect on

cooking converts most of the collagen into easily digested gelatin but has no



let's say "ON ELASTIN"

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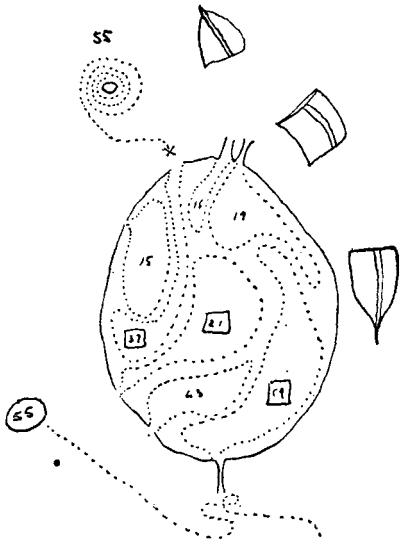
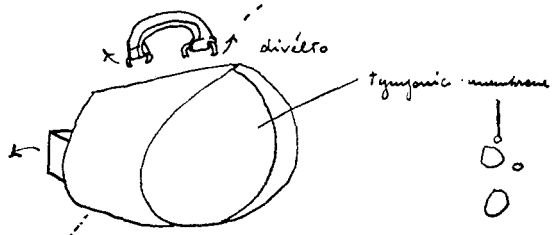
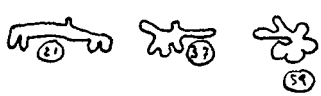
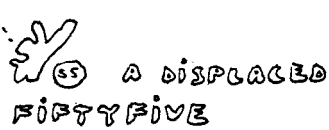


15, 19, 15 The so-called American
21 disease (neurasthenia)
37, 41, 59 VACUOLI



Sex problems are a factor in many types of mental and nervous disorders. Adolescents have their special difficulties with sex, and it is a major influence in many marriages.
Homosexuality is also a troublesome social problem.





A DISPLACED FIFTY-FIVE

medulla oblong/ (misprint)
oblongata

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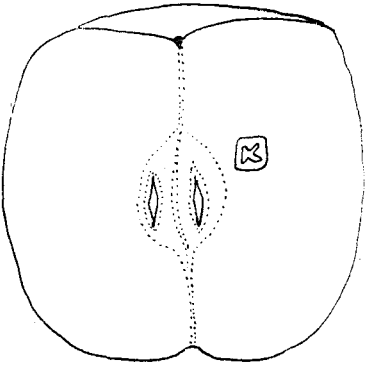
The

MELTING POING of.

Herman Melville at age 45

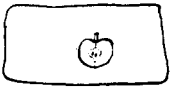


H 21 N = 330 / 331

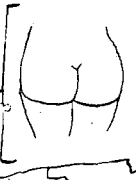
Has a musky odor and the flesh varies from

LIGHT green

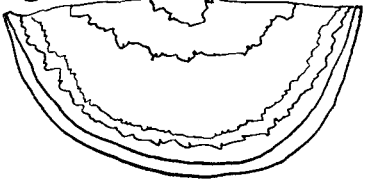
To



REDDISH orange



var: reticulatus cantalupensis



(Winter)

After this point there is nothing to counteract the loss of heat of the

METAL

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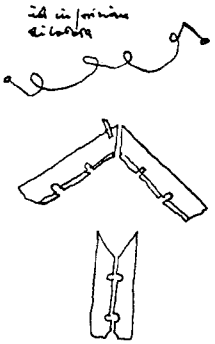
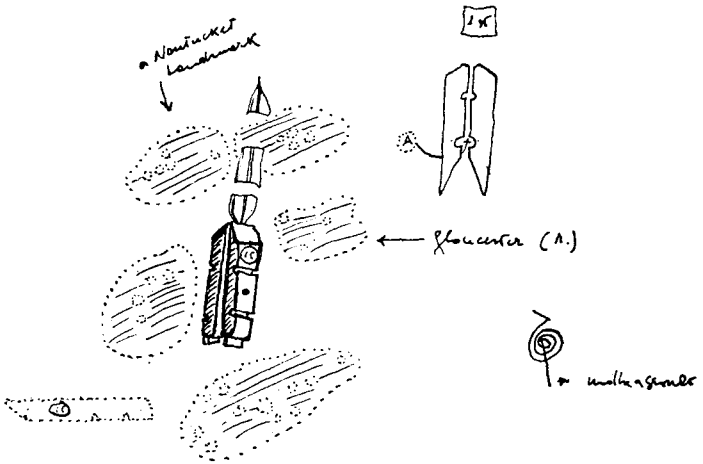
BRANT Point Light

Acts: 2:42
20:7

Cor: 10:14
11:17





Latin is the language in which mass is offered in the Western Church
The sacrifice is made present again and the bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus

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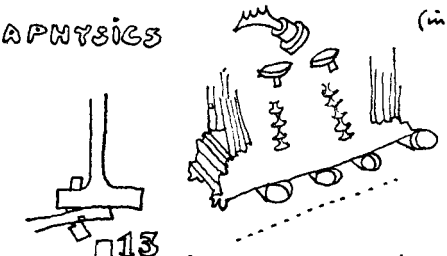
THE SHRINE OF

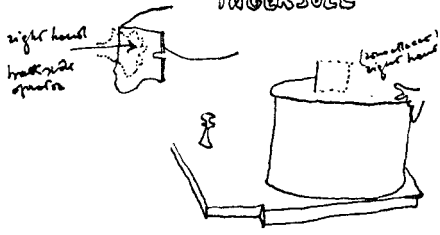
13 direction of the second stroke which removes irregularities by forcing metal into or through a die or a series of dies

MET-

APHYSICS (in tourmaline)



INGERSOLL

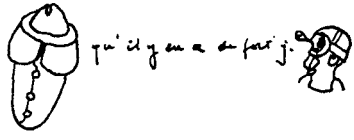


AUSTENITE

MARTENSITE

Metaphosphate (S. Mag)
Metoxas (John)
Pillinary (orig: Milanese) Thom
persons which in
Milan (N. Mag) used

it is pointed out That The cogency of This argument depends upon The assumption That if one has all The sensible evidence it is possible to get Then one knows as much as can possibly be known.



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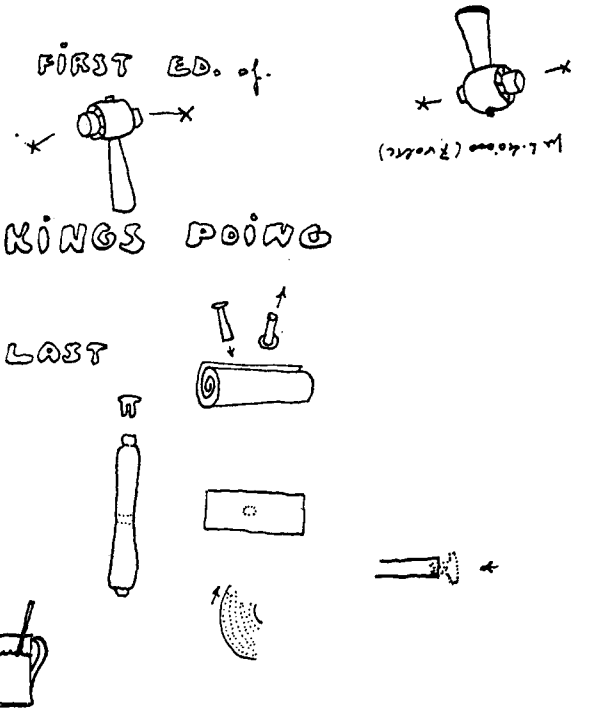
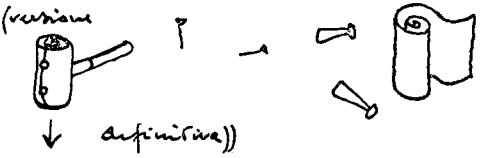


(BULK carriers.)

	No	Years.	
United States	57	15.7	
United Kingdom	267	8.0	
Norway	89	5.8	
Japan	63	6.7	
Liberia	104	9.1	maybe many
U S S R	98	7.9	
West Germany	51	10.2	
Italy	41	12.5	
Sweden	62	10.-	
France	49	7.9	
Greece	54	14.9	
Netherlands	21	3.6	

Castle Air Force Base is nearby

(versions



↓ definitive))

Each congressman may nominate 10 candidates to enter the annual national examinations for the

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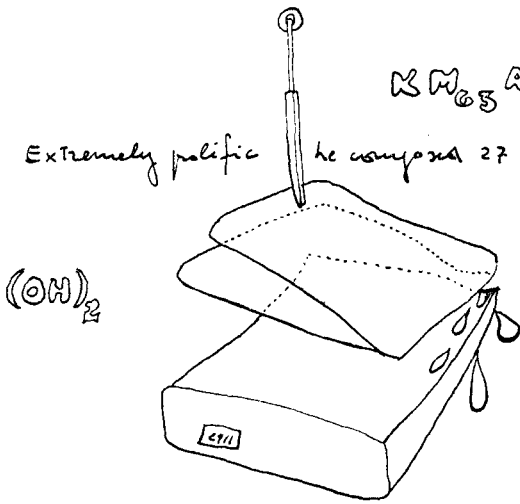
Sixth book of the Minor Prophets, Hezekiah



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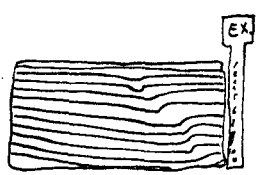

because of the perfect cleavage of this sheetlike mineral Nikolay (Nicolai) Yakovlevich abandoned a military career to concentrate on music and studied with Rimsky (Rimski) Korsakov

isinglas(ses)

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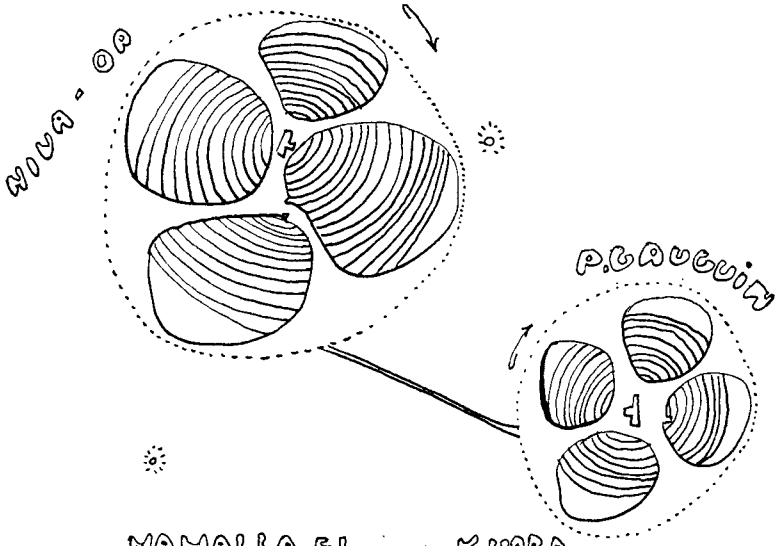
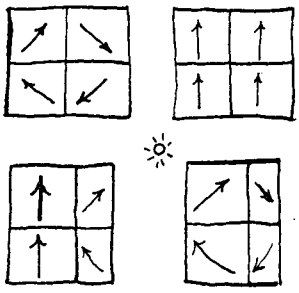
MALPRELATE CONTROVERSY

Pearl diving is an important occupation in waters off the Marquesas islands



MAMALLA EL KUBRA



consisting of some 100000 complete originally a much smaller collection of great antiquity

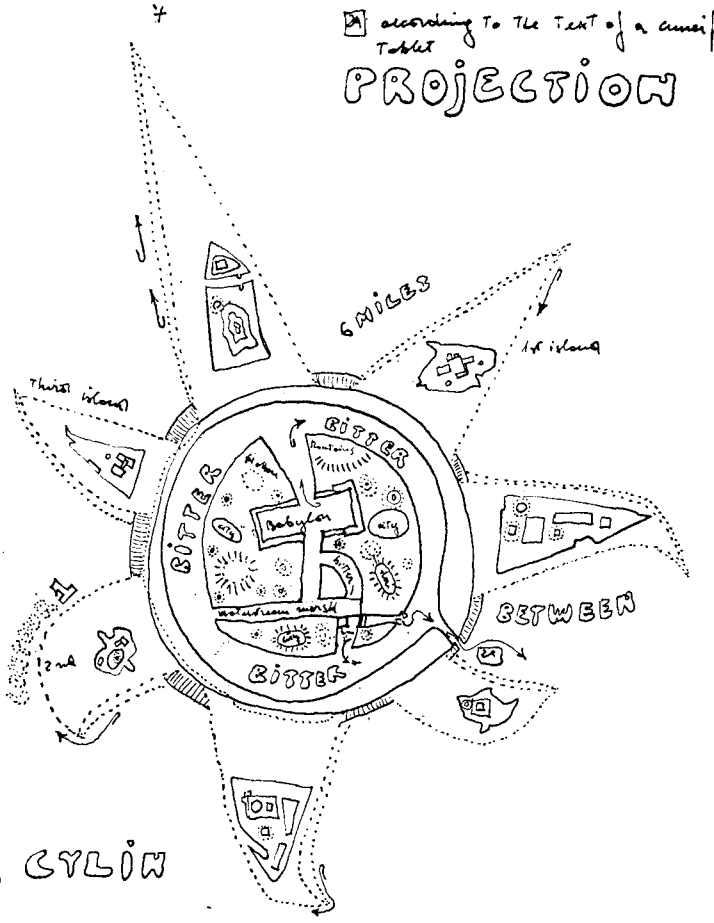
in this way a domain is formed. Recently techniques of fotographing have been developed and theoretical advances of the last few years have placed this theory on a sound footing

(O.I.S Freeman) against fierce native RESISTANCE

A CI[291]DRICAL

according To The Text of a cuneiform Tablet

PROJECTION



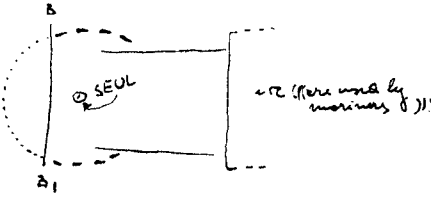
[291]

A. CYLIN

these conclusions, slightly improved by the importation of the compass from the East, continued throughout the Middle Ages. (in 1931 Mao was elected Chairman of the Chinese Central soviet government in Kiangsi)

it has been defined as the route that would have to be taken to walk on an absolute level,

i.e.:



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Ron Padgett

The Sandwich Man

The funny thing is that he's reading a paper
As if with his throat
With the bottom half folded neatly under his chin
Which is, incidentally, clean-shaven
As he strolls absently toward us, toting a sewing machine
On the front
With delicate little gold lines curling and swaying below a white spoo
in the afternoon
A dog barks—well, arf! you pull the cord attached to the monastery
Bell that rings utterly somewhere else
Perhaps the cord is ringing
And you are a Russian
In some hideously small town
Or worst of all
You're listening to the story behind the bell
A history whose rugged but removed features
Resemble those of the sandwich man
Not the one that wandered off into the swamp
Cuffs filled with wind
And was never seen again
But this new one who overestimates his duty by teaching
School in a place that has as students
At best only a bunch of heavily panting dogs
Seated in rows of wooden and iron desks linked
Like slaves on a dismal galley, the Ship of Genius
Sailing for some points known and a few unknown
Caring little about either, huffing away
Toward the horizon destroyed by other students... estudianti

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One of these others, the head, is in fact the Infanta,
In reality only a very intelligent little girl
But beyond the immense corrugated brook we know of as this earth
Covered with raving, a constellation in the shape of a bullet—
She always did love the sound of a ricochet—and I too
Can hear it often, at night, before I go to sleep
In my nose
In Spain, ah
In Spain there are the prune fields and the dark
Beauty of a prune now lowers a shade
Past the sewing machine, over which blow long, regular waves of dust particles
In one of which a medium-sized boy in white sandals is peddling up to
Offer you a worried rose

Rose... but I know nothing of this rose
Although I will draw it for you in words if you wish
Clockwise beginning at noon on the outer rim
On the first petal is a cave and the second a squiggle
The third a proper noun or else a common noun beginning a sentence
Or even perhaps a noun capitalized for no reason at all, for God's sake!

Japan! Penitentiary!
That's what we want!
To move and dance
With strangers, people we don't know
With lines and circles going through us
Who are the landscape

Whose clouds are really toots from the nearby factory
I love so much, the steam factory, making steam
For people to fall down on and permit their bodies to vibrate
Occasionally a straw hat is flung through the factory window
And sails spinning into the water

It is night

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A dog barks outside the window
Either that or the window's silent in the dog
—You'll say I'm playing the overture
And finale off against each other, after all
There's no other way to locate the middle,
Which is more elusive than it might seem:
The fifty yard line does escape
The gridiron, extending itself through
Both grandstands, through you and me, plus
A parking lot now indistinguishable from the fog, backyards, dreams, washing...
And the large peanut that has come to stand for something beautiful and intelligent
In short, civilization.

Not so! says a man in striped pants wheeled in out of the moonlight
You think this only because you associate this object with yourselves
...which is okay by me...
He was wheeled out and chucked over the balcony
Into the magnolia bushes.

At dawn, I find one other example, though nearly driven away
By the dust on it:
You are, say, six feet tall
Or six feet long
In the first instance you are an active human being other than a baby
In the second you are either a very large baby or
A corpse or perhaps a bed-ridden invalid or
Two yardsticks placed end to end. What your six feet
Would be were you tilted at a 45° angle
I do not know
Doubtless a census taker's nightmare, in which bent
Horrible monsters jump out and bite him

The next step is to know that this fuzzy angle is true in your heart
But not to know what happens to it
When it leaves there, flowers gushing out..
It appears in Amsterdam always

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City of extension cords
And ladies with boxes of rubber bands and
A truly horrible music washing the streets rushing below the pigeons
That now seem to be following him as sure as iron
Follows a crook

I don't think I can stand it! the birds
Are swooping down in and out of a large design yes!
A police car is pulling itself together
In the skies, its headlights on now
Bearing down on the sandwich man, still reading,
Whose next step puts him behind
Us as we turn ourselves around to see his other board
And the horrible license plate on it

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Harry Mathews

Colette

I

You acted patiently.
You turned away from the play,
Which was always beginning;
Although rapidly, beneath
The dying leg,
The brutal foot collapsed.
From its flatness
Touch withdrew, removing the darkness
While, familiarly wrecked,
I had died,
My silence had once distracted you,
You had heard me for the first and last time,
And directly returned the sun.

II

Since nothing amazes us, why couldn't we be gifted
With absolute memory, reckless and universal, to live in an ecstasy of
recollection
If not of discovery? Memory the muses' golden wand,
The smell of prophylactic hands in Achaia redeeming
Toothache with something that happened before I had teeth,
Whether painful or pleasurable doesn't matter—nor did my desire,
Colette,
Hurt less than toothache, or otherwise: actions
Walk as ever.

III

Since a new name presents us on your own,
My pain can know all the more. (O.
K.) Not by my venereal

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Air,
Nor the clever tar, nor the
Real parts in the lucky reed and unallusive
Hay (dumping the vision-tatters—
A wry resort, *amie*, for other weeding,
Although full of you), invoking
December to remain:
The girl gives you away.

IV

Not too much April sorrow.
The badger goes forth in the near-gray gloaming.
Orderlies guard, and the marauders are scheming.
Night, echoless upon you. The idea, fist-heavy
Raging of a tomorrow: the fish in the bay
Are the slaves of their time, and not of art.

V

The wounding sweetness
That made me want to live with you
In a country like your body, where I could love and die.
I told this to the girls preparing the flower-beds.
One dug pensively: "But Wimpy is such a country!"

VI

I thought of your well-ordered body
Moving calmly to a fox trot, a firm sponge
Teaching me the luxuries of despair and lust
With thunder and rain, or the birds attack each other,

VII

A ritual "quod ad frumentum attinet,"
It is yellow as I slip over the lintel to correct the sun.

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VIII

Corn from underground silos—
The earth is familiar to me, small, and beautiful,

IX

Ore of an old religious stratum
Shining all the more for having been forgotten
Under waste deposits of Neoplatonic thought
In the rocks, like smoke and ash in a dream.
We must never...

X

...where mists might shroud the sun so that I could look at it.
I could never see into your unmatching eyes.
I saw you so little, I never saw you in tears,
Now all of them are dark and some move you.

XI

I have dreamed impatiently,
Turning away from work that I could have finished,
And quickly, at the ends
Of aging arms,
Compassionate hands have clenched,
In their hollows
Eyes have withered, withdrawing their light,
And in slow disintegration
You have died, and your voice
Can guide me no longer,
I have lost sight of you forever.

The retiring pensioners pass.

XII

Had I been older...you were like a sister
Exciting a younger brother (does he know it?

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Did you know it?), and
On the Rarian plain, the daughters of Ocean
Went on digging flowers. I
Dreamed of cutting your breasts off with a trowel.

XIII

I will sleep in the fire until my mortality
Burns away. At the room's center,
A hair part—

XIV

Colette, was I wrong to quote Baudelaire,
Radiant as a worm?

XV

You were soothed
By the sweet tribute of black locks
And sly glances of infatuation.
On Sundays, with your companions,
You discussed love, to perform in broad daylight
No longer;

XVI

Afterwards I sat on a sheepskin-covered stool
And, veiled in darkness, underwent an experience
That can never be revealed, or hidden.
An ear of corn was reaped in a blaze of light.
The aged child was dead
—As if anything could take him away.

XVII

I shall be annoyed
At the denigrations of a white pate
Or at aggressive, disgusted arguments.

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On working days my enemies
Will grow silly with hatred against me.
The wind drops. The sky darkens.

XVIII

I bathed in the sea and roamed the beach with my flashlight.
I did not find out if language can include
A bedroom stretching from Portland

XIX

To Brest, or the resurrection of the unfractured body
In a timeable happiness that is necessarily preceded
By its own recollection, but in my mind—

XX

Flaming
Gray to the west. I know all about it
Down here: but where?

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The Witness

Edward Hoagland

I had been trained as a hospital technician in the army, and instead of the gleaming lab job uptown by which I had hoped to pay for graduate school, I was working in a defunct office building on the edge of the Lower East Side. It was a lab job, but what a lab! My cornflakes-and-cream face began to thin. I lived in a hair-raising rooming house, wondering what my BA was going to be worth and what would become of me. At the same time, however, life down there seemed bracingly rich. The pigeons of Venice wheeled over the roofs and the fountains of Rome spouted up from the hydrants. Churches in eight languages. You could buy diamondback terrapins and whole sheepskins, octopuses and sackfuls of beans. I still think somebody who lived near me could have traveled all over the world without seeing a face which really surprised him. The streets had the spicing of danger a young man likes—"Count Draculer" ruled in the block. Next door to my room was a death's-head guy who wept more than most people laugh. "My wife, my poor wife." I used to smile when we met on the stairs, being polite and supposing that he was laughing, until finally I distinguished the words. The family across the backyard kept roosters which woke me up in the morning.

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Where I worked was a bleaker, Chicago-like district of factories, empty at night. It had been bustly about 1900 and was full of April-fool structures with gargoyles that goggled down. A fop stood on the edge of a perfume warehouse looking into an oval mirror. A large Christ close to him held a cross, and our wild-faced, collapsing building had MARY along its front in archaic lettering between wreaths of stone. My boss was a man named Darwin Hanes, forty-five. He wore a Purple Heart pin, and ties that announced that he was a fruit. He was earnest, kind-natured, a flurrier at work, and rather the pure scientist in his intentions except that he'd flunked out of medical school and dieted on nothing but personal bloody noses in the twenty years since. Anyway, he kept a room for projects of his own, with tubes of Tb and guinea pigs sneezing—we mopped down the floor with iodine. He was round-faced, pouch-eyed. He made his acquaintances uncomfortable by staring at them for long, long stretches when he talked to them. Alone in the world, he was in that state seen commonly in New York where you give the person about five more years before he goes into a mental ward.

His cronies were Puerto Ricans, flattered to have an American friend. Darwin had learned Spanish during one of his self-improvement spates, and blew hot and cold on them, both sexually and just as chums. Hot and cold otherwise, he was touching answering the phone, full of belief and civilization and a scientist's pride; then the choked pain in his voice (the doctors thought him a nut) when the man on the other end said he was sending a couple of patients over for tests and expected a kickback. He'd start shivering slightly, almost as though exhilarated. The world was all black, and, bastard of bastards, he'd make his way! If the girl in question came in with starched sleeves she preferred not to roll up for her blood test but took off the blouse instead, Darwin insisted on coughing, despite my embarrassment, until I pushed in to watch. He had a blackboard on which he did gene transposition equations, patterned on Oppenheimer, perhaps. He put on a mystical stare and brushed at the chalk on his hands absently, living the life of a genius as far as he could. He'd

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come in in the morning having "seen the whole thing in front of me" just before falling to sleep, and would sit half the day at his desk muttering over the records he made of experiments, without much result—he'd "lost it."

A great man's life was variety, so he never stinted on phone calls or shopping around for equipment. He was interested in immense centrifuges, in the newest of sterilizers, and barrels of culture media. He believed busy men picked up the phone on the first ring—"Yes, yes, this is he"—taking notes on the margins of whatever was close. He had a soft voice that strung the salesmen along.

There wasn't much work, although enough not to pass the day reading, and I looked out on Lafayette Street a good deal, which was a large brutal one-way thoroughfare, always a drama in progress. At my window I got to be sort of a fixture. The drivers sped by, keeping up with the lights, and under the traffic's roar it was hard to distinguish other sounds, only the most frantic yells. More than once, happening to glance outside, I noticed everybody on the street had stopped and faced in our direction because of some appalling thing which had been going on underneath us for minutes. A cross-section of business people came into the area along with the garment workers, but the neighborhood acquired its peculiar tone from the bums wandering in from the Bowery a few blocks away. Though they were only a handful at a time, because of them nobody could ask for a drink of water at the soda fountain, get a car pushed, or ask any favor whatsoever. When the traffic light went kerflooey we must have had six or eight accidents before it was fixed, since everybody assumed someone else had called up about it. They were shoeless and bloodied bums, heaving, gasping and threshing bums. One never knew what might be wrong with them and never investigated. Once during the summer I remember a woman sat on the sidewalk from lunchtime on, apparently making different sounds. Several men stopped and peeked up her skirts but didn't do anything for her. A telephone company driver talked with her awhile from his truck; and a lady and a friend did busy themselves, except they hurried on all the more

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hastily for their distress when three cabs refused to carry the woman.

It wasn't possible not to watch, just as it wasn't possible for me to be very effective in helping without it becoming a full-time job. No one else did any more, not the priests or the nuns walking through, not the cops, though the cops did whatever eventually was done. The station house soon knew my voice as a crank's. It seemed I was running downstairs all the time—feeling pulses, dragging bums who passed out out of the road. I considered myself a kind of a last resort. The gas station group across from us would boot a man in the seat of the pants and bait him into "insulting" them so that they could grab their billy clubs, wrenches and tire tools and give him the run of his life. I shouted as loud as I could; I'd point from my window, establishing that I was witnessing it. Darwin never looked out, even when nothing was happening, and if he saw me hunch up from what I was watching, he left the room in a blaze of exasperation with the street and with savagery and with his own tender heart. He was sometimes hysterically harsh when he found a derelict trying to get warm in the hall but then was unhappy the rest of the day.

I was the laughing, skinny young man full of minority sympathy. I'd laughed at fraternity life, laughed at the army, and now in uncertainty I laughed at the city here, although it was the thinnest defense. In the bazaar-like streets around where I lived I began to flinch at the richness, not that it didn't delight me but because I was living amidst it too; nobody was going to come get me out. I had a girl in the building named Ida with a pre-school son and a husband long gone. We shopped from exotic market stalls or ate in great Chinese restaurants or went to the Statue of Liberty. She had nice black hair when she looked after it but malnourished skin—an eager vulnerable girl scalded as tough as a cat. Her eyes were marvelously brown and big, a very light, shining brown. We used to joke that she polished them, and, without contradicting the skepticism which had got knocked into them, they fluttered with accessibility. The lids constantly closed as if holding them in when I turned on my little charm, such as it was.

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Since she was the first person who'd ever been specially taken with it, I turned it on as hard as I could.

How she needed a man. She'd trot at my heels as close as a colt when we went down the stairs. She was a Japanese whorehouse in bed, and scornfully mocked me for being a mere boy, years younger than her, when her lopsided liking for me stuck out. She ate on eighty-five cents a day Welfare money with Tony, her son—powdered milk, pork hearts in government cans, and peanut butter. She fried powdered eggs and baked surplus flour. A forkful of butter and peas was a pleasure to her, and herring on crackers or a lamb chop was food for a queen. Her boy needed galoshes and toys and everything else and already worried about his mother. "Somebody" would give her a new pair of shoes, "somebody" would give her a sweater, he said, much too young to be hinting. He'd ask me to carry their garbage can down, and if I had change from an errand I'd done for Ida, he ran to her with it as if it were some kind of medicine.

She got colitis, bladder infections, aches in her ears, and every few days appeared to be out of her mind—she yelled in a hollow monotone. Her ovaries formed knots from nervous tension, and it was at one of these times that she thought she had gotten pregnant, which pulled us apart even as we pretended to join together. Fiendishly helpless, she was dependent on clinic interns and procedures whenever she or Tony got sick, and since the furnace broke down about once a week, this was often. At midnight Tony would suddenly wake up laboring to breathe, his temperature a hundred and two. A doctor or ambulance wouldn't be sent unless it went higher than that; and without my handouts she hadn't a cent for a taxi. One autumn night when I wasn't home she went into the street with him in convulsions in her arms, and found and convinced a patrolman that help should be called, afterwards standing beside him for twenty minutes. He was a young man and kept wanting to stop the police cars which passed. He went up on his toes, looking to see if the policemen were friends, but knew he would only be reprimanded for not having waited for the ambulance. In all these prob-

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lems, the money I gave her was scarcely a starter because if her sanity really had cracked for as long as a couple of days, wheels would have been set into motion by the Welfare Department for taking her son away.

With each of us frightened, we sometimes had quite ecstatic excursions, as gay as one gets when the roof may fall in. We rolled the stroller along the East River at Delancey Street. The freighters that came sliding by seemed to fill it completely. We'd race them, while Tony hollered. I was fascinated by him. Week by week he was developing, and very much looking around for an older male. He watched me shave in the morning—"Is that how we do it?" He peered in when I took a shower and came up for regular battles with me. I grew very tender, toting him upstairs when Ida stayed late in my room and we put him to sleep on my couch. Then they spent the night, both in the bed. Such cooking, and dashing with tidbits for me—if she didn't claw me she gave me the moon. Once I had become a passion, she used every tool. She encouraged my fondness for Tony and told me he loved me, prompting trips up by him too to say that he did. The next time we were alone, he would say carefully, "I don't love you, Gene. I don't, you know." She thought me elegant, gentle and fine, and the security she needed so desperately came into it.

We went out at five in the afternoon, when the pigeon-fanciers were up on their roofs. White swoops and black shadow patterns. And every Friday a farmer sold tomatoes, comb honey, and cider and cheese in the storefront he rented—yellow cream, to make the sick well, and even cornflowers in the summer. He talked Ukrainian with his old neighbors, having left Ninth Street twenty-five years before. It was a link for him, and he was the man who'd made good in their block, and their tie to the woods and fields. He had flat farmer's arms, blue eyes, and a reprobate's face, the slack cheeks and lax mouth. "Just the pure stuff, nothing put in it," he said, like an article of faith, when we asked if the cider was sweet. His pear crates and his heavy old shirt and work boots were as good as a trip out of town.

Often we whooped out to Tompkins Park where there

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were the modern, sinuous slides. Dusk was the ideal time. Tony crawled through the whale-shaped pipes, giving out screams, and went up to the other children. He always seemed infinitely dearer than them. I followed as if he were mine. He'd negotiate some over a toy, then turn to me and throw his ball, or hike onto a higher slide, wheeing down with the tentative relish of someone enjoying what he knows is likely to be his chief recreation for the day. He always was interested to hear what we thought he'd particularly like to do next year, and he enjoyed these dusk go-rounds in much the same way that we did, for the magical sinking light and the teeming park emptied except for a few muted kids at the swings. He climbed the big slide with boosts from me—it was too high for him—and slid cautiously down. One afternoon they had got hold of a pup tent and we helped put it up on the baseball field.

Tony had a luminousness, a resonance to him that was pitched very clear, a sing to his affections and words, perhaps just from growing up in a kind of state of emergency. After each bout with flu he seemed changed, a little bit older. He had awful dreams and toilet troubles and slept with his mother, but otherwise wasn't more nervous than plenty of children, so that whatever effect all of this would have was left in the air. Though he cried during Ida's lengthiest rages and spent many consecutive hours at the TV with that deadweight stare of a child, he remained promising. Of course Ida's hope was Tony in school, that here he would get the support he needed; some bright, cultivated teacher might take him in hand. He'd begun at a pilot-program nursery school and the teachers excited her with their comments. She and I had our ups and downs. My helping hand would be abruptly withdrawn, if only because she'd refuse it. In a day the world of dried Navy beans would return, the hard-as-nails mother. There was a lesbian middle-aged woman who paid Ida's phone bill and gave other aid in emergencies in exchange for the loan of the place certain mornings, and these visits increased. The plastering fell more frequently, provoking wilder reactions. The laundry piled up when the hot water failed

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and fifty cents wasn't forthcoming from me to take it around the corner. I wouldn't know what was happening downstairs, except that I'd hear a groan or two when I went past and resolve all the more to keep my distance, tired of catching sore throats from them, but worrying about the boy.

That Christmas: what a Christmas that was. No money, his mother bewailing into the phone. She'd determined to find some means of buying him a decent spread of presents but she had failed, and the failure knocked all her palisades down, the wolves howled—she was terrified about everything. We had had no contact for a couple of weeks, but the day before Christmas I overheard part of it and went down with a ten dollar bill for a tree and so forth.

"For who?"

"For Tony and us," I said, in the door.

"More games. More games and games and games," she told me in the most utterly exhausted tone, although already letting me rub her forehead. She rocked with it. "The dog act," she called it.

"You won't leave me alone. You won't stop knocking, will you? I must fill a function for you. I'm a pool you can splash in and see some results. You can see what a kick you have. You won't stop dropping in." Her skin shone with sweat and her eyes with exhaustion and her pale face looked flattened out. Soon she ran out of words and stood there, the uncleanable apartment in shambles around her—a two dollar strip of linoleum that was colored to look like a rug. "It's so painful when you just come and go. You don't stay, you don't say anything, you watch us and after a while you go again." But she gave up resisting and we rushed out and bought a bristly green tree and a bundle of presents, threw snowballs, and put on the radio for the carols, got benevolently drunk, and poor Tony had the kind of a day that he had much too often, a hectic heaped one which he was supposed to appreciate to the hilt, after the climax of weeping and tensions in which all the bones of the holiday had shown through—all the bones of grownups' needs, of which his enjoyment was intended to be the relief.

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She showed me she made up his bed like an adult's, since he was in school, and showed me a plant he'd been given and a drawing he'd drawn. She talked about getting a job once he was old enough, when she'd get off Welfare and burn all her rags. Rags they were, too, a pitiful closet. I was brought up to date on everything, except hints were thrown out about new boyfriends in order to keep it all interesting. We talked through the weekend, Ida rooting for me wholeheartedly—my absurd boasts. Her mouth was like her accessible eyes, vulnerably wide, with a deep-set survivor's smile, a beautiful smile that probably owed part of its permanence simply to being such a large one. I loved looking at it while lying beside her, force-feeding her eyes. She was very acute but always the all or nothing type, and I was experimental. I had never been loved before and was somewhat the tyrant, or anyway fascinated by how variable women were, passion was so different from friendship. Her hair, if it wasn't limp, was lovely and springy. She had heavy long slick-skinned buttocks on rather short legs; sharp breasts. I hung a bathtowel on myself to show how potent I'd gotten. She said she was glad we had met while she still had some of her youth left to give me. Her cheeks, as wide as a cat's, could be middle-aged-sullen or wonderfully girlish. She had toil-ridden hands and a workhorse neck because she'd supported her family from the age of fifteen. She believed in the soothsaying stars as well as her dreams, the latter of which sometimes awed me. On the street, if I spotted her half a block down, she looked intimately linked to me like a relative, but all out of whack, preoccupied, miserable. She lived such a hairtrigger life that she'd wait half the night by her door for me to come home when we'd fought, yet be far from amenable. And I played her the dirty trick of connecting her in my mind with the maids my family had had in my teens whom I'd never got up the nerve to try and lay but had wanted to. It was especially dirty since she was so conscious of caste. She'd had to leave school to scrub people's floors, and she would have hated me.

Darwin, meanwhile, was fizzing along. He concocted electrical devices as well as his medical stuff. He was the kind

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whom one feels the sorriest for, where the energy's there but amounts to nothing. He set a room aside for Ohm's Law, with shelves that almost met in the middle and equipment that hummed from the floor to the top. He began buying equipment in earnest, having inherited a few thousand dollars from an uncle who died in Colombia, and at once became secretive. This was the break that would bring the bonanza. Nights and Sundays he gave to the Law (Sundays his favorite day now), alone in the building except for the painters who had studios; and no love was lost among that bunch. Whenever you stayed in the building late you discovered new mysteries about the people. The fad was to buy camouflage cloth from the war surplus stores, so that, seen from the outside, the windows looked kooky and jungly.

The crazier a person was, the less tolerance he seemed to have for his neighbors, the less mercy or pity, and the harder he was to deal with. We had a woman we used to give leftovers to after lunch, but she wouldn't open the door no matter how loudly you called out your name. You had to put the food down, knock, and then leave, making plenty of noise so she'd know you were gone. Garbagecan Maisie. Darwin was called Quasimodo by the painters and, in turn, was raucous about their dead ends. He called me lad, which, feeling as green as I did, I didn't mind. In his wilder states I was Androcles, never suspected of plots against him. He *was* quite like Quasimodo, in fact, once I had heard the name I couldn't forget it. He was cheerful and singing much of the time, blinking and deaf to the outer world. I could see him up in a belltower kicking and pushing away at the bells. His own plots were hair-raising, involving his tubes of Tb as they did. Of course he never carried them out but I had my first taste of powerlessness listening to him, because if I'd phoned the Health Department it was I, not him, who would have been judged to be nuts. With his animals, while he was humane in the short-term ways like water and food, his experiments grew very probing.

At my window, being left to myself, I went through a knightly period. If I saw a colored lady unsuccessfully trying

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to persuade a taxi to stop for her, I would go down and signal one and hold the door, so that the driver wouldn't realize that I wasn't the passenger until it was too late. And a muscular, rebel Negro in a wheelchair lived around the corner. He would need to go out for food or a bottle of liquor, hating to ask a favor, and yet there was no other way to get over the curbs. When he was sober you'd see him swallow his pride and do it, but if he was drunk he would spin in his chair in circles for fifteen minutes on the edge of the traffic, yowling and sobbing, as the people avoided him all the more. So I used to go down for that.

Darwin took to working far into the night and bought a cot to sleep on at the office in the midday. Either he slept scarcely at all or he slept like a dead man, wildly irregular. He cooked for himself and cooked for his mice, and the smells combined with the hammering from the locked room (he was putting up still other shelves) was crazy. As always when he was most withdrawn, he looked his most clean-cut and pleasant. He quit joshing with patients, worked in silence, and contaminated some of the culture plates in his haste. He had laughed at the neighborhood's burglar alarms, which were always going off, ringing all night, but now he installed one himself. The work we were given fell off. I spent long lunches watching the *bocce* on Houston Street, more Italian than Italy, really, or walked to the library or to one of the kosher sandwich emporiums or, in the summer, to the public pool near Avenue C where upwards of a thousand children would be swimming and the universal shrillness was like sunlight. Long lines waited behind the diving board: two lifeguards stood ready. Each kid climbed on and walked to the end, every step broadcasting that he hadn't the faintest idea about how to swim. In he'd plop. The guards took turns going in. Sometimes, leaving the lab at night, I passed by the local high school and found the whole street spread with trumpeters blowing away, the very bleakness everywhere else accentuating the gaiety. Postponing going home, I'd look through the paper for anything uptown to do. If worse came to worst, I just sat in the subway where it was warm, reading

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the news with the men who dreaded going home to their wives. It was a year of intense wretchedness and happiness mixed, each deepening and giving the other color. On the subway, I amused myself by imagining that everyone sitting there was in armor of various sorts.

Ida's laugh became nearly as throaty when I kissed Tony as when I kissed her, since it was plain that I loved him a bit and that her hopes of marrying again weren't going to suffer because of her son. Her dependence made her even more of a hothead and made me take her for granted, besides. We avoided each other for days, despite his pathetic attempts to bring me back, when he'd knock at my door on his own initiative and tell me his mother wanted to see me, "needed" to (this after I'd heard her drunken yelling). But if we suddenly met, we'd get into each other's arms again, the sarcasms crackling, and her soft buttocks filling my hands. She'd lean her head back for a kiss. She compared her husband and me, both bastards, and laughed, "Has the dance palled?"—meaning her rivals. I'd never made so much love before and found it was habit-forming. Success brought success. I chased, phoned, and dashed about, pushing, pushing defenses down, wet in the pants and wet in the mouth, this brimstone to her, naturally—the poor girl could hear the high heels through the ceiling if I brought someone in—I soon didn't. She'd upend her apartment and clean and explode, and the next day, hearing her yell at her son, I'd show up scared at her door for his sake, wondering who I should call. She asked who I was; had she met me before?

"You thump in here as if you're some king. Well you're not, you're just Johnny Average to me, and you better believe it. You're disgusting. You walk up and down those stairs—you're as arrogant as a turkey—I don't listen for you any more, you know. I'm not your biddy. You think he loves you. He doesn't love you. And I don't love you. I'm just curious to see what you'll come up with next. I learn, you know. I don't give a damn if a man like you drops dead in the street. You're just a fucker—yes, you're flattered, aren't you, you're such a boy. You think that's a good thing to be. You love

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me to kiss your chest. You think it's such a magnificent chest, don't you? You think it gives me a charge."

When she didn't drive me out, she clutched at me like a life ring, and didn't hear a word she said, because if I left she hadn't a clue as to why but would stand with the tears slowly penetrating the glaze in her eyes. Holding each other, we watched Captain Kangaroo, who was such a slob that he was a comfort. Tony, letting his oatmeal congeal, stared funnel-faced too. My notion was that, regardless what happened between me and his mother, some day I would help to put him through college, or get him out to the country for summers. I hoisted him over my head, gulping down my delight in being a father; and the two of them lined up next to the door when I left for work to kiss me off.

Once she thought she was pregnant everything was intensified. She talked about Tony for hours, as though lonelier now, bored with romancing, only the mother. The round-robin trading of germs went on, like her crescendo-type suffering, standing past midnight behind her door. I felt horribly trapped. Why in god's name was I living down here? Half my attraction from her standpoint was because I came from another world. And why had I gotten myself in the fix—I'd forgotten how new the experience of winning love was. I'd made use of her and now it was nothing but castor oil pains and a sanity stretched to its limits. I was scared to death. She with her neat, small ears, French nose, and her scrubwoman's lumpy arms—at my dreariest, I could imagine us going through the clinic mill and the intern's glances directed at me wondering why. The battered old tenement faucets rang like sleigh bells, and we were as merry as mourners, she sitting beside my knees. She hated men, worshipped men, and I rubbed her forehead, where the slamming she'd taken had registered most, the deprived and underdog bones. But she bloomed in exultancy, maneuvering her figure. She looked like a movie star. It was my baby. We were knitted together now. I was chilled to the bone! I'd never imagined such passion existed, much less that I might be the object of it.

When this aghast reaction of mine was clear, Ida got into

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more of a rage than anything could have put her in. The luster went out of her skin. She turned into a fiery sick cat, bedraggled and humped. "Why didn't you let me alone? All right, we played house nicely and you found out you couldn't care less for the likes of me, I was beneath contempt; so why didn't you leave me alone? Why did you leave it up to me? It was so peaceful without you, I was getting along perfectly. But no, you wanted me on the string for the times when you hadn't anyone better. You revolt me, my friend. I don't want your baby. You figure out how to get rid of it. I haven't the energy to spare for you—I need what I have for my son." And, indeed, her efforts were all to shield him and keep up his routines.

Darwin puttered or pounded throughout the day in either his guinea pig room or his "juice" room, while Lafayette Street grew still grislier. Bums are straight out of a comic strip anyway, with their charcoal-smeared faces, their staccato-gapped teeth and gallows-bird postures that look like they've already been hung. When I watched a man chased down the street by a man with a knife, it was slapstick, like the comics, not TV representationalism. In the first place, the knife was outsized, and the man completely the wrong shape for running, and the man following him, though less bloated, ran like his feet were in boxes, plus the outlandish pursuers who were trying their best not to catch up. Real street fights were broken up into whirring fragments with baby-like waaahs, and bums fought with wood slats like Punch and Judy—the outcries, the shadow-show fury—till, after a long inaudible speech, the winner would take a few theater bows. My troubles at home didn't help remove me. On the contrary, I lost my perspective, I could see only the suffering. When I was pipetting something, I'd distinguish a child's shrieks under the rush of the cars and look out the window and see one being whipped on the legs for minutes on end by her father. What could you do? To step in directly would make it worse for the child—the mother already was doing her best to distract him—and to call the police would be more drastic yet, once the guy talked his way out of it and got the girl home.

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The only weapon was simply to watch—to *watch*, so that the fellow knew. Long after the family had left, I would be jumping up from my desk to lean out with cramps in my chest as if it were still going on.

In the army I'd worried about being "dehumanized," although the army had softened me, but here was a vastly more brutal evironment. The truck drivers shouted Giddyap at the bums pulling pushcarts. Even the street was caving in because some foundations had been misdug, and it threatened to block up the subway. I was just high enough to be out of throwing range if I shouted at people. When I was outside myself, though, I quickly got expert at looking away. Either you watched pointedly or, for safety, you looked away. One time a troop of housewives and I followed four or five friends who were beating the wife of one of them, stopping and pulling her into doorways until our staring, our numbers, dislodged them.

Ida was shifting furniture to cause a miscarriage and doing hot baths. Going by on the stairs, I heard the brass ring to her voice, on the phone calling friends. After a minute she'd tap at my room to tell me the latest, since it was me in her body budding. Steaming with fear, she went up to Central Park and leapt off the boulders. My hair stood stiff to hear about it. I hugged her, begged, and yet finally had nothing to say, realizing how little the difference was between jumping off boulders and going to the doctors that Darwin knew. She was petrified; she said that her life was a wreckage; she felt hot to the hand as if she were running a temperature and could hardly put two words together, afraid that they might take Tony away, and frightening the daylights out of me. All of a sudden, however, worried that it was some cruel piece of egotism, I would look at her and be tremendously pleased at the pregnancy, sexually excited, and go over her with my hands. She felt the same way immediately. We made the most tender, delicious love, with her stomach the center of it, never so sexy.

Darwin considered me some sort of link, and joked about "raping girls" and the rest of it, though disarmingly gentle. He told World War II stories, sitting across from me at his

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aluminum table and wiping his ribs with a towel if he wore no shirt. He liked to keep to a schedule, to overwork, which wasn't easy in a lab such as ours, and occasionally to take time off for an indulgent talk with me.

"I'll tell you, lead your own life. Nobody has any business with you. They won't understand what you want to do. They'll laugh at you out of ignorance. So you don't ask permission from anybody when you pick out something you want to do, you just go ahead, and then you won't have any problems," he said, the brief phrases to add pithiness. But his successful man's manner was rendered incongruous by the misfit's tone he gave everything; he pronounced like a solemn schoolboy. It was in his mouse room that he could be bluff the most briskly. The hundreds of rustling creatures did seem like employees—another twill factory in operation. He inspected with overseeing interest, or picking them up, injected their stomachs, their poor little pots, with that undeniable affection which experimenters, seeing them always as plural, have for their animals as a group.

Our peppiest moments came when a bold bum would wander in wanting his heart listened to. Darwin got shouty, but if the guy didn't run out of the office or wasn't insulted he usually would change around. He rapped his stethoscope affably into his hand like the doctor he'd wanted to be. He'd sit on the edge of the desk and chat like a boy with a younger boy, wrapped in smiles, not so puffy-faced now. These were his cheeriest periods of all, as if he realized that he could still be a part of the world. The bum inevitably blossomed out too, thought he was awfully skillful to get so much free attention —blood pressure taken—and even forgot his worries about his health. The loudest voices are the voices of bums. The final survival energies, drawn if necessary from everywhere else, seem to go to their throats. We had several memorable specimens, stuffed into their clothes like badly made puppets, the clothes brown and gray and all torn—stains, a scrap of a beard. They were bodiless heads. They were so badly off the only reason they still could walk was that they had wasted away to nothing. But the voice mushroomed, as strange as

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the lush, unnatural plants which grow out of dead things. Or sometimes the only piece left of a bum was his laugh.

"Wherever I happen to be I'll come in for a checkup every few months, just to be on the safe side. I'll look-see if I can't see a fairly intelligent-looking doctor some place pretty close around. I don't like to walk too far away for it. That way you don't have to worry, you know nothing is sneaking up on you, and if you do what the fellow tells you to do you're gonna be okay until the next time—little heart murmur or something, it's gonna be all right. Oh I can take the cold, I'm very good on that. I know the techniques. They trained us with that. I was up on the DEW Line three years you know. I was up in the Arctic. A lot of these bums wouldn't last a day. Three years of that and you'll take the cold fine; you can take anything. Yeah, you'll see some snow up there, you'll see some dandy cold."

He was like a boy who was shining shoes, with his pert line of gab and the patronizing smiles we gave him. He had hands like a turtle's skin, and strips of newspaper inside his socks, a red toucan nose, a white and red face like a ham bone, and he shook like a soaked sourdough from his illnesses. His ragged coat flapped in the wind like a flag when we watched him leave. Right away he begged from a car at the light, not to lose the boost to his confidence: he put his hands carefully behind him and stooped like a bon vivant to speak to the driver.

We watched the fences at the garage. I laughed but Darwin was bitter like any respectable citizen under a siege. It was hard to tell what was going on because they also worked at the regular jobs. They filled up the place with cars and sweated all day, with a reputation for piddling cheating. But then these cryptic vans would pull in, *Pong's Produce*, *Old Reliable Pipe and Joint*—ten-year-old trucks which had been painted over a dozen times. They'd move the whole garageful in order to stick the truck in the back, getting very excited and busy.

There is nothing likeable about criminals. They're sneering creatures, ready to turn vicious in an instant, and it was an exacerbation to have them placed opposite us. Of course it

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made little difference to them when I waggled my finger. They'd grab up tire lugs and chase a man. If a Negro drove in for gas, they gave him a Queen Isabella bow and had him wait, pretending to be just about to come, in order to see how long they could keep him. "You goddam bow-and-arrow, get outa here!" They worked, they threatened, in absolute incoherence—a shrug, a lunge at the breastbone. They couldn't talk without jabbing their hands at the person, the mark of respect being not quite to touch him. My stomach got turgid and hot as I'd watch an incident develop. For some reason I went back to the screw-you signal of my boyhood and pointed with that, trying to make myself heard. I shook in confusion for the next half hour whether I'd stayed to watch the scene out or whether I'd ducked away like Darwin. They robbed their own pay phone when they needed change, and the Puerto Ricans hated them too and used to write "warps," "gunnies," on the wall at night after the place was closed. One Sunday Darwin watched a car which they hadn't been able to fit inside completely stripped, down to the axles, by three Negroes. He was delighted. It yawned there Monday, while the men fumed.

The four were related, I got the impression, except for a muscle-bound fellow who seemed the most decent. The dominant guy was a blast of straight vigor. He worked a twelve-hour day in his shirt sleeves into December, never ceasing to bluster and shout. He ate with his left hand and worked with his right, talking over his shoulder to the hired, muscle-bound one and yelling ahead to his fat husky brother. The brother, with an unpleasant face, kept up with his share of the jobs but sourly. He had the children who played nearby, attractive twins. The fourth man, who was maybe a cousin, was nervous-natured and thin and tall. He had lithe, precise hips that pumped when he walked. He was the most unpredictable and independent and had an oddly chic wife who came and sat in their car every few days while he worked. She looked nice; she was a softening influence, very much gentling him. A snide scowl snuck over him when he got the snow shovel and ran for a bum (they'd let the guy go in a corner and start to

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pee first). The two children did not have a dampening effect, but when his wife was around none of this happened. He resented me—he was the one who stared back. If I passed on the street he usually quit working sarcastically, though we never spoke.

Virgil Grissom and Hubert Humphrey were driven through on their way up from City Hall. We had a vegetable wagon clatter by daily that serviced the luncheonette downstairs. I looked down at the part in the horse's mane. The Hoodoos fought with the Roman Emperors in the next block. And we had Light and Gas men. They were trying to pump out a manhole before doing some job, except that it filled up again every night. In the morning they strung tapes around the hole, hung warning flags, and set the pump going, and smoked and Coked the day away until the last hour, when they took everything down again. And a mailman made constant pickups—it has to be seen to be believed how many are made.

By the garage was a liquor store owned by a man with a villainous voice and a face shaped like smoke, gray as smoke, who flapped one hand smartly behind when he zipped along on a delivery. He parked in the station and was friends with the bunch, although he considered himself a cut above them. Ours was the civilized side of the street. Right below me was a classical tailor, who suffered like a sunfish in a pail; and, next door to him, a womanly printer whose window display had not been changed for fifteen years and whose mouth was as large as his stomach, the better to laugh with, presumably. He cut the ads for his son-in-law's business out of the paper and carried them around like snapshots. Then his cobbler friend, as skeptical and as seamed as a jockey. He hammered so neatly it was like a stage set: stroke, stroke, the sole was fast; and the nails in his mouth for comic relief. He had a comedian's mouth anyway, and he'd go out and pet the vegetable horse. Two Puerto Ricans ran the luncheonette in eager immigrant fashion. The best thing about them was how they walked off at six o'clock, rolling like seamen, relaxing so hard. They were agreeable and got along fine until the slapdash cooking cut into their business. They responded by cook-

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ing more hastily still and by stinginess with the portions and reducing the menu, so that it was another sad story.

We had plenty of people around and yet we had nobody. When something happened and I would go down I would be on an empty street. In my way, I was expert at preserving my own skin. I never "closed" with anyone, just put myself close at hand. When a car jerked out of the traffic one time with screams from inside, I opened the door on the girlfriend's side to help her get out, not the man's, and retreated as he came after me. "Oh you better run, he'll kill you!" she shrieked. I could see Darwin's pale face above me, and the jockey squinted behind his window as if he were watching a dangerous jump. Darwin believed he had a sixth sense, which made him especially fearful. By now he was sure I'd get clobbered. He told oodles of war stories, remembering more as he went along, and displayed the scars of a beating he had received from some young homosexuals in an earlier phase. They'd tattooed the star on his hand, he claimed, which alone would have made it impossible for him to return to a more normal life. Breakdowns and other new chapters were revealed. An old anxiety about robberies returned. He stopped inviting his Spanish friends up because they might see the equipment and be tempted. He checked the door to the roof twice a day. "That's where they come, off the roof." While he was scared to sleep in the lab, he was even more afraid to leave it unguarded. He used army phrases, shaking his head and gritting his teeth. He even quit leaving our leftovers outside the old lady's door down the hall in case she broke in some night after more.

But he was for me, telling me twenty times that he would be my character witness. It was often the police I was battling. In civilian clothes a guy would march off a vagrant, refusing to show him his badge, just whacks. Or when they stormed in in response to a call, arrowing down Lafayette the wrong way—these were the large, lengthy scenes, spreading across the wide street, repetitious but excruciating after you had seen a few. The gold badges slapped with open hands, as a detective would. The silver badges poked their clubs like

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bayonets until a pretext came for swinging down. I bought a camera and drafted letters to the *New York Times*. I fretted on the outskirts, trying to copy cap numbers, and more than once I only saved myself from being arrested by backing down. The standard ending became to find myself being forced to lay my ID cards across the roof of a police car while all the stuff was written down, to stand there, hands on top of the car, in front of the open door—it functions as a sort of station house—until the decision was made as to whether to arrest me or not.

I got nutty, no question about it—more compelled and susceptible, quick to tear and quick to tremble. My eyes had been rubbed raw. The fire escapes on the garment factories filled up with people if a Negro was involved, and some of them would rush downstairs and fuss with me on the edge. My ragged nerves were like theirs. I had seen so much violence by now, so many atrocious injustices, that any beginning carried its whole plain progression for me—I understood Darwin's sixth sense. The police were the same, for that matter, and so were the gas station toughs. Everybody picked up from the last time. Anger from then, or anguish, whatever it was, piled onto the new occasion. In a flash the despair poured back, and I would be leaning over the patrol car hood again, my teeth practically chattering. "No, no sir, buddy, you take out your fucking license yourself! I don't handle nobody's wallet!"

It was December, that awful Christmas, and we had the procession of Santa Clauses coming out of the subway all day with their locked boxes and Santa Claus bells. Their terminus was a mission on Houston, so we had the entire city's street Santas, who were really just ordinary bums dressed up in red and white, limping along much as usual—they didn't bother with stomachs for them. We also had Fire Department exercises going on within a couple of blocks. I needed a vacation badly, needed to get to the country; I was irritated simply by humans and human activity by this time. If a bus driver reached the end of his route and wanted to turn around, I argued with him. The signs on a church or a synagogue that said

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that it closed at 8 p.m. struck me as pharisaism. At my cheerfulest I typed myself with the bearded, anachronist Jews in shiny black coats, only a very few left, who still hauled their pushcarts through all this madness in the old style, purple with sweat, having no relation whatever to it.

Though the frog tests I did on Ida continued to run negative, she wouldn't menstruate and the doctor thought that he felt a pregnancy rather than cancer—he said it was something. I would drop in on the way to work, if possible, because of my own shakiness, instead of at night when I would have to stay longer. I gave her money and horrified hugs and pained, gingerly looks which tried to convey affection. It's hard to reconstruct exactly what she was feeling since I was trying to avoid being aware of it. She "suspected" I didn't love her, though of course I had never pretended to, and she really thought a good deal of the time that she was going to die or at least be made sterile. She dreamt of water, of babies, of me, of death, and raged against being a woman, while at the same time she was trying to shield me from what she was going through, that is, except for the nights when she heaped her sufferings on me in blinding half-hour explosions, her voice like a flatted cornet. She ate and threw up as if she were pregnant, and looked taut and scrawny with that violin-string attenuation of a cat which drags itself. Then, next morning, what a Liz Taylor opened the door, bellying gay as the clouds! I'd bite her. I had a permanent cold from exhaustion.

Her room and a half had her marriage furniture in it, appropriately mismatched and in faded bright mummylike colors. When there wasn't another reason, my heart went out to her for the apartment alone, so unspeakably dismal and small, and she without even the subway fare to get out. The layers of paint and linoleum extruded dirt from tenancies fifty years past. The two beds took most of the space. The books were her husband's Genet, the decorations her own sporadic attempts which she couldn't get rid of when the mood left until she saved enough money to buy something else. I regarded the place as mine for loafing ("your doll house," she said), and we still had rather happy, whimsical evenings

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sometimes, with billing and cooing, no barbarities. We lived on three different planes, mine being the mundane. Ida was in a shadow world, smelling life, smelling death, the surface realities scarcely a glimmer part of the time. She drew upon every ounce of her concentration to manage the details of Tony, yet he chirped out the window obliviously. He had the most marvelous shrieks and chirps, like nothing I'd ever heard before. I almost wanted the baby born. He shot with his gun out the window too much and chased the cat hard, had very pitiful moments, but mostly one wondered whether he wasn't living on borrowed time, whether such glee in defiance of logic and of his surroundings wasn't going to have to be paid for. Certainly in other respects he could go either way. He was slummy-faced, coarse and tough for a while, as if growing up to be somebody I wouldn't be able to care about. Then in the afternoon, maybe, his eyes would spread open, his face would go soft, as he listened to one of his mother's tales of Aesop. He was precociously gentle whenever she reached her rope's end, just as Ida after an incendiary couple of hours always stopped short and knelt down in order to make it up to him with an effusion of playing and intuitive love.

Twice the social worker dropped by unannounced for what was called a Complete Drawer Count. And the tenement pipes rang like railroad bells. "Just hold onto me," she'd whisper, as crazy as eels. It was "*Please* don't stare!" or else "You're not looking at me!" when I was too anxious and pitying. The truth, as we waited for word from the doctor to act on, was that the danger that she'd have a breakdown was worse than the risk of any abortion. She was Catholic, and I rubbed her resisting back by the hour while she talked. I was a futile substitute, but she was afraid she'd lose Tony if she went to a priest, and she made me afraid to go to one too. Listening, I couldn't fix on a plan for any of the eventualities. There were other shouts in the building but not pitched like hers, and she lay with her head in my lap, so that I saw the tears in her nose and the swollen blood vessels. Tony writhed on the floor.

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"I've taken so much and what have I got to show for it? I have you here, younger than me, almost a child really, because you were hard up, and now you like to think of yourself as wonderfully kind and honorable. I don't care who's with me. I don't even know where I am. Have you ever felt neuter? Well that's how I feel. I don't feel like a man and I don't feel like a woman. I'm dead, I'm an idiot, I don't feel. I wish I were a tree, or have I read that somewhere? I must have. Nothing is original with me, is it? I don't believe in God but I'm afraid of Him. I don't particularly like you, but I loved you—that's not original either. I don't want to sleep with any more men or have any more babies but I don't want to be sterile. I see horrible figures in dreams, but they're the best company I have except for my son. I'd do anything not to die, but I want to die."

Just as dreaming of having a breakdown is said to tap off the pressure building towards one, when the janitor in our building cracked up Ida appeared to revive, to catch a kind of a second wind. It was a hectic long night. The guy was afraid his relatives were going to kill him and begged for help in heart-rending yells, but he was the one who was armed and they were only afraid for their lives. He ran into the tenants' rooms for protection, and when we ran out, he followed, afraid to be left by himself. With his knives in his hands, he went down on his knees and begged us to spare him.

Soon we were to find out she wasn't pregnant at all, but I'd sunk into a state where my laughing and joking were of no use. I couldn't eat. I was worn out, bewildered and worthless as far as assisting her was concerned, and unable to pick myself up or take a sensible trip or take some good pills. There had been no chance to collect my wits and hunt uptown for a job. I thought I'd never get out of this, and the winter shut most people indoors, so that the suffering seemed that much worse. If you dodged past a barefoot beggar, the blood on his face had froze. The old Jews took temporary respites, but the bum pushcart pullers continued wretchedly. Many drivers hardly acknowledged their right to the street anymore, so long after the heyday of pushcarts. It may have

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been an impatient attempt to scare the man or a misjudgment because of the novelty. Maybe the cart didn't register on the truckdriver's eyes, being neither pedestrian nor motor vehicle. Barreling along and simply not seeing it, he clipped the cart from the rear, spinning the man in front of him. He didn't begin to brake or swerve until it was done.

We called the police from upstairs. Darwin had bought some goldfish and was tinkering with the aeration. By now it was established he never was going to go down on the street if something was happening, and I didn't object, I didn't want to go either. But I'd seen the accident. The man was lying there with nobody touching him, and I still had a sense of being "medical": in fact appeals on those grounds were occasionally made to our window.

He looked dead from close up. I asked in the liquor store if we oughtn't to phone for an ambulance. The fellow was doing paperwork.

"Nobody can call an ambulance except the cops. You know that. What's the matter with him?"

"He was hit by a car," I said. I'd disliked his preposterously sinister face for so long, and he turned round and grinned.

"Yeah? Well probably you ought to call the cops, don't you think?"

I was unable to answer that. Outside, I looked up and saw Darwin worrying in the window, as were the printer and the two Puerto Ricans on our side of the street, although they had no apparent reason for worrying about me. A nervous tick in my cheek asserted itself; I realized I was bone-tired.

"Phone for an ambulance," I yelled to Darwin. The victim appeared quite decidedly dead, however. For all the illness I'd seen, he was my first dead man, and yet since he looked like hundreds of magazine pictures—the ragged refugee dead by the road—the sight could not have been more familiar. Every night going home I went by at least one drunk passed out, usually in danger of freezing. Dead as they looked, I went by assuming, like everyone, that somebody else was going to stop, because to see to them would have tacked on an hour or more to my day. This was absolutely routine, but I felt for a

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pulse with a sadness that had a momentum behind it—he *was* dead, I knew. Sick, shaky, I wanted to laugh. The pity I had withheld so many times had caught up with me. The traffic streamed by. A couple of the gas station men came out to wave it on so that their entrance wouldn't be blocked, and the truck driver passed cigarillos around. He was very upset, an outspoken, balding person in a checked wool jacket. It was after four, nearly dusk.

"They shouldn't be let on a street like this. I mean it's for stuff that's going through, you're supposed to go around twenty-five, thirty-five miles an hour. Poor baby. That never happened to me before. Right out of the blue, they step in front of you and you've killed somebody. Poor bastard. Jesus." He walked around between us. I didn't nod to agree but, on the other hand, didn't find him objectionable. The difficulty was that I had an exact image of what I had seen. As crisp as a diagram, the truck had traveled in a straight line. The cart had been in the path of that line and at no time had the truck hesitated. The impact with the man was too searing to bring to the front of my mind but it was indelibly there. The daylight, dim to begin with, was rapidly vanishing.

I went up to the lab, since I could feel myself get incoherent. The man was dead; no sense in gawking about. "Oh, all bashed to hell, that's all," I told Darwin. "Hit him from behind." The truck had *McMartin's Scotch Whiskey* on it and a pasteboard bottle, and the driver, we saw, walked into the liquor store and provoked enough interest that the proprietor at least poked his head out the door. The Texaco bunch toed the cart frame. "Vamose," they said to a carload of Spanish, keeping the driveway clear.

From the gestures, a consensus was forming by which the pushcart man was to blame. Nobody checked him again, and I wondered if I hadn't been too quick in presuming him dead. Though this was nonsense, I came down. They were by the truck, looking for damage. Without much basis, I got the idea the guy might have handed out a few bottles as I was coming downstairs. The cart man, in Raggedy-Ann clothing,

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was partly thrown on his side, with his head bloodied and his seat all cut up from a bottle of wine that had been in his back pocket. Amazed, I recognized him as the one who had sat and chattered to us about the DEW Line in such an incongruously lively way. All of that spunk and spark smashed up like a broken doll—it revolted me.

"They shouldn't let them out on the street, or you'll even see them up on the sidewalk. No light on him, no way to see him," the driver complained. The others wanted to drag the cart over a bit to pass the traffic by faster. "Leave it. It's way the hell out there." But with a scared, guilty face like mine might have been, he swung back to me as if I was the one he wanted to convince because I was next to the body.

"Nevertheless he was on the street," I said.

"'Nevertheless?' " He sounded the word, mixing respect and sarcasm. "What are you, a doctor?"

"No he's not a doctor, he's just a Nosy," chuckled the thin mechanic. I'd always been glad it wasn't one of his huskier partners who had taken the special dislike to me, but I saw he could beat me up easily.

"I knew him a little," I said.

"You knew him?" Bolder, the driver asked with his eyebrows *why* I knew him. I hunched by the body, feeling righteous and safe. After walking off, he came back and stared down at the man in sad disapproval. He leaned with a nervous snort, touched the man's rear, and smelled the alcohol on his finger. "Maybe the noise frightened him." His hands did the noise, then the cart veering into the traffic suddenly. Charades over drunks were so commonplace, one had to remind oneself that this fellow was dead; and although I was glancing for suspicious bulges on them, the way the garagers were looking at me, I might have been the man who had run the bum down.

"I knew him, yeah." The store owner left his doorway. "All bums around here." He puckered his mouth, looking down, as if to convict any customer of his. The driver asked who delivered to him.

Why was I being so punctilious? I'd sympathized with the

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driver at first—why get him in serious trouble when nothing constructive would come of it? The man would be just as dead. In the same way as the gas station crew had taken his side partly to spite me, wasn't my attitude the reverse? With their long-flanked red faces and their choo-choo-choo vigor, I'd never seen them so close before. It was like bars being removed. Here they were next to me, no barriers. And they all had the camaraderie of living in Queens and shaking their heads at the neighborhood. The dynamic, blocky, all-vigor guy kept leaving to heave himself onto the fender of the *Pong's Produce* truck and practically disappear inside its motor. "You live in that place?" he asked me, pointing.

"I work there."

"You work there?" He laughed at the building facade with its blotchy camouflage curtains and the wreaths around *MARY*.

"I'm a medical laboratory technician," I said, trying to invoke the immunity more than the prestige.

"Where do you live?"

They listened, these people I had been pointing at, judging and needling for months. It was too late to leave and I saw that by staying here to argue this issue I had lost whatever effectiveness I had been having up in my window. It was like the police interrogation would be. When they heard where I lived they guffawed.

The cart had carried junk cardboard, ground almost to powder by now, and pedestrians pumped by as thick as the cars. By standing still I got the sensation of managing some kind of show. The most touching detail was a handful of wooden letters the size of a child's blocks, O's and H's, which were strewn alongside the gutter. In the warm weather the cart must have been used as a hot dog wagon.

"Tell me something. Why are you all the time sticking your hand out the window? Are you trying to make a U-turn?"

We all laughed. The all-vigor fellow pushed up on his arms from the *Pong's Produce* motor to hear it repeated. A postman in a truck made a pickup, dragging his sack past the body. Infuriated that I was trembling, I searched for the top of the

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bottle, thinking that if the seal was still on I might prove the man had been sober. The early darkness was very confusing.

Once the cops came it was the trial in advance, acquittal quickly a certainty. They copied the license number on the tail of the cart. They shared with the gas station people that extraordinary beefiness found in the city. The owner of the liquor store emerged to touch the victim's rear and convey the idea that he had been drinking, and the expression on the dead bum was no help. Besides being so very surprised that he might have been seen as drunk, he looked haughty and quarrelsome compared to when he had chattered to us about Hudson Bay. It was the face of a man with freezing wet feet, with scarlet, goose-pimpled hands and neck, who was trying to ignore the shouts from the traffic and ignore his misery. When I drew my mind back to those moments before he'd been hit, I remembered no drunken appearance. He'd pulled like a dutiful, suffering horse that knows that its work is the lesser of evils. Now he looked like a crunched guttermouse made up for the role of a bum, with the stubble and stock ruby nose.

"Old bums like that, they don't carry a light, can't hardly control what they're pulling, and they turn their ankle or they slip where it's wet—had a little too much—and out he goes in the lane. It's a crime when they're out like that."

"Actually, the light was pretty good then," I argued in a despairing tone. "I work right across the street, and he was coming down very fast, right by the curb. The poor guy was right in front of him. I don't think he ever did see him. It was much lighter than this, plenty of light. He didn't have his headlights on, himself, as a matter of fact, so it doesn't make any difference if the cart had a light of its own because it wasn't dark enough yet to need one."

Hoots from the witnesses. The scorch-faced owner said, "No, he had a load on."

The driver glanced over to where he was parked. "Well I turned 'em off, naturally, but I had 'em on, they were on."

"Sure, his lights were on."

I was chilled by the gas station group, for whom until now

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I had been pretty much of an abstraction, up in an upper story. They were giving me total attention. The stream of Santas climbed out of the subway, limping by us, and the ambulance came; another mail pickup was made. When the body was gone it required an effort to remember there even had been a body. As in the rehearsal, when they talked to me the police turned to look at my building. With their faces trained neutral, they asked how I'd seen through the camouflage cloth.

"I'm a medical laboratory assistant. We don't have that. We have the sign about blood tests in the window."

My home address registered badly again, as it would have in court, and perhaps I hammered too hard at the light being so good. Also, their first impression of me was marked by my searching look as to whether we'd crossed swords before, a look which must often betray petty criminals—that and the way I dropped my head like an exhausted bull in the ring, very small, windedly quivering. The uniform looked different to me. That charcoal blue—business blue. It had become almost impossible for me to talk to police without being hostile or supercilious, and so it was like a job interview, where my name was being written down but I knew I would never be hired.

I left work right afterwards, in a tumultuous funk. The killing, the codger gabbing away happily in our office only the week before, and everybody's closing over the facts of the accident—I felt as if I had flu. Darwin seemed queer as a coot with his star on his hand and his goldfish and mice and heavyweight name, and I wanted out.

As I crossed the Lower East Side, the record stores blared, the peddlers' trucks jingled, mocking me with a wealth of sounds. A priest in an overcoat walked up and down on Elizabeth Street since he hadn't a cloister, holding a flashlight over his breviary and whispering the words. Kids were clouting a ball. They towered it up seven floors, then tried to spot it before it fell. A cat was making love to a dog. The light was so mutedly rich in night colors that my eyes led a life of their own. The vivid neons had a handmade gleam more stimulating than neons uptown, and the squint I'd developed, the

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squint of a person who couldn't walk five or six blocks without seeing a man slugged, an arrest or a beggar, widened out in spite of itself. My eyes crowed. I heard Hindi, Rumanian, Cantonese, Polish, each lilty. A guy was thocking an oud with a spoon. Two beatniks had hung a piece of cardboard on their fire escape to communicate with the girl opposite—"Hey, Sweet!" Children spilled whooping across the sidewalk, and the off-Broadway theaters seemed like opera houses up in the Yukon, dowdy, primitive structures, newly whitewashed, in the midst of a wilderness boom.

In my block the bookie's bird store had become bona fide. His life's enthusiasm was these evenings, when he really sold birds and sunflower seeds. He sat on a bin in his pigeon coop engulfed in wings, while he talked through the wire to a couple of chums. The whole block was dream-like and misty, the light Parisian, with every building a different color and height and shape, the fire escapes zig-zags of rusted orange, and the rooftops running along in a dum-de-dum-dum. Now I was squinting against the beauty—I must not be strong enough to live here. I caught a glimpse of two fencers upstairs in a loft, and a man inside a locked girdle store was playing his fiddle to a macaw. I looked at the lemons in the street stalls, at the mounded-up oysters and booties and Preen, feeling utterly flattened. That Ida's future should depend upon what I might choose to do was the worst circumstance of all.

She was plenty crazy at first that night: acute concentration on me. Her squeeze when we hugged was too strong to have any meaning as such and had none of the sexiness that was best at arousing concern.

"Something happened?" she asked. She was stroking my back to loosen it. With her harrowed face, which was so much more anxious on my behalf than anyone else's would have been, she looked at me with an open love that overwhelmed me in shame, that she should be sorry for me, tenderly reading my muscles for tension, after the way I had dodged in and out the last weeks. A large face, like a boy's from medium range, like a woman's if you were close or away several yards. Brown eyes, black sweaty hair, and that

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great wide survivor's smile of hers, as serene as a smile in death. I got a fresh sight of this gritty girl who was carrying a child by me and living on powdered eggs and charity clothes and plain lonely terrified misery. I realized how little I'd done, how execrable it would look to me in a few years if I hadn't shut out the memory altogether. My god, how little I'd given her! Beer to help her relax at night? Not usually, unless we were necking. Blueberries, avocado, if I was having them? No, not unless we were eating together. A literal forkful of buttered string beans would have given her pleasure sometimes. I must have been mad—her son standing between my knees looked at least twice his age because of the life they were leading—I'd lost perspective completely!

I ran out and got mushrooms, steak and oregano and so on, and spoiled the meal by only hardly talking. Tony wanted the fathering element of it in equal proportion with the food, so he sat on my lap to eat, which he did with politeness and dignity. It was a funny meal. My affection for him gushed up until I could scarcely swallow, watching his every move, and with Ida I was the penitent husband. I'd forgot how at home we could be, although she assumed my silence was because of her pregnancy. But her glance lost its glaze; she got peaceful and sweet. She drew the big circles under my eyes with her finger.

"You've had a worse time, haven't you? You've worried more. You're very generous. Yes, you are," she said when I shook my head. "And I'm not after you, you know, that's not what I want, you musn't feel any pressure like that." At her simplest and most attractive, she went on about how nice I'd been. She meant it, but at the same time I was thinking that we were half married already, and how fine it was to have supper this way, that to go through the further formalization might be right for me too. Once she was given a little stability, there would be just her warmth, no jaggedness. I couldn't bear picturing the boy dragged off to an orphanage, and felt protectively head-of-the-house. I began reaching under the table, and told her the accident story, more detached about it than I would have imagined an hour before. We

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hurried the dishes, mouth to the sweater already, and got Tony to sleep. She was a bit gaspier than I liked but very giving. Small breasts with large nipples, and an overall skinny toughness I loved—geisha-small feet with high arches, a mouth like a plum. It was another night when the loops bound around us made us relish each other all the more.

The next day we found out the loops didn't exist. I stayed home from work to get over the pushcart episode and she came in at noon from the doctor's and said he had made up his mind it was a false pregnancy. The explanation was skimpy because we had paid out so much already she didn't pay to have a long conference; but we scarcely hugged once after that. I left the house in blank angry relief and didn't go near her apartment for almost two weeks. I sought out a Negro girl I'd been flirting with, to enter that brittle, tight little set, the dark half of which wanted to go up in the world and the white half of which wanted to go down. Since I, of course, wanted to go up like the Negroes, I didn't quite fit at the parties. She was the life and direction at them. She was impatient, tense, prickly, a virtuoso with people. We had one banner day, plus three club-foot attempts to repeat.

The district absorbed me all over again. I wandered as I hadn't since first arriving. Moist, smothery December weather with wind and sun, when winter hovered just overhead, giving one more day's grace, now another. I got the exuberant sense that here in one spot was my whole fellow family of man. The racial mix on the streets brought a racial peace which was affecting if you went into other parts of the city. For both colors the process was rather like learning to fly—so many thousands of hours of looking to be put in—and down here we'd gotten farther along. Avenue C had a small-town flavor. Because of the cobblestones and the loose babies, traffic crept; the pedestrians virtually ignored it, so that there was a vacation atmosphere. I used to go into the Siberia Branch of the Merger Trust Bank for the fun of looking at who was assigned there. This was a grotesquely ancient building across from a live poultry market and a garment ends warehouse, and the tellers were dazed from their banishment

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from Madison Avenue. Italian ices were sold out of baby carriages by Puerto Ricans during the summer, and practically every block had its *shul*. A *shul* was a hole-in-the-wall synagogue with four or five Stars of David built into the front, looking defiant and jubilant, from some ghetto in Europe and bursting with hope. In the zany designs of a lot of the blocks you could see the failed architects who at last had been left a free hand; they sometimes went Moorish to celebrate. The neighborhood was as rich historically as the range West of the same period, but was being bulldozed away. I strolled and gazed through the misty warm weekends—at the patchworks of relic wallpaper on the sites half demolished, at the washlines, the three downtown bridges—snacking on Old Country foods, and talking such talk as one enjoys slightly wistfully with a cab driver in more affluent years.

At the lab I tinked tunes on the urine bottles, lining them up. I treated the test frogs to beef liver for having been right about Ida from the start. Darwin was chiseling holes for a new wiring system. Five months instead of five years seemed the prognostication for him. He was eating graham crackers gobbed with butter ("I can't stop") and got bigger and bigger, more like an overblown boy of fourteen. The woman whose door we left the food at was also taking a turn for the worse. Twice she let her sink run until it overflowed. When we picked the lock we discovered her sitting in bed with her feet drawn up under her, watching the water. She creamed her skin and dyed her hair yellow, so it was hard to tell if she were senile or out of her mind.

I understood Darwin's fondness for mice. If you look at them, they're graceful and comely. You can see them as panthers, you can see them as pandas. They cluck like a muffled henhouse, whereas guinea pigs sound like puppies down in the cellar. Light as a leaf and taut-legged, they skittered about their cages and sneezed from the bits of sawdust stirred up. They scratched their ears and cleaned their tails nattily and basked upon piles of each other as on piles of cushions, holding a nibble of food in their paws. Given food, they'd hurriedly wash their faces before feeling ready to eat, and when

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they were hunched on their hams, their shoulders bulged out like extra pouch cheeks. Their tails were their pride and spiritual spine; they always were handling them, bending them round to clean and inspect. Stiff, up-curved tails signaled a fight; or a nervous mouse, with kissing noises, vibrated his tail out stiff and straight. After endearing, midget yawns, they often slept in a row like sucklings and pressed their paws against their cheeks. Or they burrowed head first in a pile so that just their fat rears and pink, bird legs and rubber hose tails stuck out. As they sickened, their white tails zoned into gray; they sagged and wizened like little sand bags. Sometimes they fled death in leaps, so that it clenched them in mid-air and they thudded down. Sometimes they lay on their sides, scrubbing their noses in spasms and coughing and sneezing, and went rigid like that, rolled up in the pose in which they'd been born and scrubbing invisible nostrils. But it was generally a homey, humming room that Darwin and I were often in.

My problems were solving themselves. If I was too scared to quit my job, the job was foundering under me. Obviously there would soon be no job. Although I was still at my window and my preoccupation with the violence got worse, I didn't dash down to the street so much. I avoided knots of the Harlem Negroes who worked near us, and would break into sweats of fear at odd moments, walking through a dark block—I developed a whiz-along walk. The subway was more than ever like an armed camp and, when I came out, I would see everybody facing in one direction and a man there trying to box with a bus. One day a cement truck stopped revolving. Rather than funny it was frenetic. The driver cried. I'd gotten infallible at sensing a fight, sensing its start and exactly its course. Seeing people clumping in front of me, I'd usually turn off but sometimes I kept numbly on through the thick of it as if mesmerized.

The garage crowd amused itself by setting off left-over firecrackers from the horde they'd blackmarketed during the summer. They were having a lazy spell and would hire a passing bum to do some of their chores for a quarter or so. Ida

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was jumpy with me once our Christmas reunion was over, and Tony, taking his cue, was also cool, and yet we remained a threesome. He'd run away from me but then when I caught him and lifted him up he hugged me even as he was struggling. Ida was furious at my treating her like an object taboo. She moved away as if not to let me touch her any time I came close. Although I couldn't conceive of sleeping with her after the suffering that we had gone through, her person still seemed as much mine as a wife's. I refused to stay out of her room when she dressed. I pinched her elbows to see what she weighed and if she was eating enough. I touched my tongue to her forehead if she looked pale to feel what her temperature was. I used to rub her whenever we talked—rubbed and rubbed. I'd spank, I'd order her around, give gifts as usual, fondle and advise her son—everything except sleep with her. Now that her life wasn't a shambles, wasn't about to break apart, she was left with it, which was not very pleasant either. It was a precarious, temporary sort of a friendship we had, both of us riding along until I would go my way.

January was uneventfully dreary. The boiler next door blew up and ours went on the blink for a week out of sympathy. One afternoon, late again, about six, I heard the electric-horn blast, "You goddam spear-carrier!" A bum hadn't washed a car well enough but wanted his money. I winced at the window, it was all so familiar. The four mechanics were cutting across the lot in diagonal paths, toward the man or away after their monkey wrenches. The wife of the thin one was in the station, so he was trying to subdue his cousins a little, walking slower than them, waving his hand. The fellow was standing his ground on the theory that perseverance would carry him through. Standing quietly, he wasn't easy to see because his color just matched the shade of the darkness, his clothes showed up better. He was dead still. You had to look twice. He was only about in his forties, and everything happened very fast. When he saw the crowbars, he used language too. I was violently agitated. My face had lurched into a flinch; I'd stopped breathing. I was so clocked into the gears of this kind of stuff that every part of my body went

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sick as if as part of an allergy attack—I knew, I knew, I moved like one of the gears myself.

I was tearing downstairs. Outside, the whites were already in a half moon around the guy (the wife in the office door). "It was a shit, nigger job. You don't get nothing for that," said the blast-vigor brother with the voice like a highway horn. He had really too much energy to focus it on the one guy. The fat brother slouched in a posture of venom, but the muscle-bound hired man was less interested in hurting someone than in being strong. My lean opponent was between, holding them off as he cursed in an undertone for the Negro to run. In harassment he pointed at me as if "look what was coming."

"I done a good enough job. You weren't paying nothing but chicken feed anyhow. What do you want? You want to gyp me," said the man. He muttered that slavery wasn't going on any more. Not young, not quite humbled down into middle age, he was in the galled period of life when he had no impulsiveness left to save him. They encircled him, seeing how he took it, poking at his calves, and they called him one or two names. The auto trunks where they kept their weapons gaped open sinisterly. I'd drifted to the edge of the sidewalk on my side of the street with my tentative gait, my quick-backtrack gait, which had saved a great many necks by this time, including my own.

"I done a good job for you and you're going to keep my money?" He hadn't determined upon defiance, it was just happening. "What a poor sack of fish you are. You're cheapskates. Go on back to your tiddle-prick then. Go play with yourselves."

A moment went by before they could believe their ears. As one man, they turned and rushed for the woman, roaring, to drive her inside. The circle opened for that, but he still wasn't running; it was written into the lines of his body that he wasn't running. I'd never been faced with a stituation where there was no running, so all my gingerly jumpiness was no help to me. I was picking my legs up and putting them down, twitching them almost like some sort of tail,

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but nevertheless remained frozen right where I was. I was nothing, unable to cross the street, unable to function. When they came back their feet shook the pavement, and a visible panic pushed up through his knees. The lean mechanic pointed at me to hold me where I was, and it was as though I were pressing against a thick pane of glass. The fellow did try to escape but had waited a second too long. They ran him into the wall and held him there tight, waving their shovels and lugs. "Call the cops! Call the cops!" they were yelling to Musclebound, in order to establish that they had phoned first and that an attack on them by the Negro had followed Musclebound's call. He shoved a dime in the phone, beating on it. I could see the white faces like flowers behind me in our building's windows. It was closing time; most of the lights were off; the cobbler was getting into his coat. I think I was yelling —at least my mouth was open. The Negro had covered his face with his hands. Since he didn't try to dodge loose, they didn't hit him more than a couple of times. I was weeping with the collapse of my nerves and because I'd done nothing; I'd been unable even to move.

The police dispersed all of us, finally. I was shaking and finished with this. After spending a few days at home sleeping, drinking milkshakes, I called up an uncle of mine in the midwest and borrowed enough to move uptown and devote myself to making a different start in the city.

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Michael Benedikt

The Way Things Settle

There will always be a distance
Even when things are pressing
Against one another, so hard

That even crockery expresses a fluidity.
There will always be a gap to see through

And when the clouds seem to separate
So far, that the sky is
Almost embarrassingly present

There won't be any place to lie down.
But your complexion will seem transparent.

In all the various directions
Things are forming a configuration
That will be hard to break.

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Paul Carroll

In an Ozark Flight over Iowa

By way of gratitude and goodbye to my colleagues
George Starbuck and Marvin Bell and my student poets
in the Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa

A dazzle
of a day,
even though it's two below.
Flat ironingboard of Iowa below
wrinkled by week-old snow
and sprouts of matchstick poplars,
coil of khaki river
and those peppercolored silos:
network of perpetual intricate nourishment
for reindeer in the Ice Age,
buffalo, cow and pheasant, rabbit,
pinto pony, mackerel and crow,
Cheyenne, pioneer and Sioux...

"—Ladies and Gentlemen:
we've just landed at the municipal airport
serving Clinton, Iowa..."

That jugeared knuckly face
of middleaged fat farmer
screwing elbows into shabby dufflecoat
to lumber off the plane
also has an eternal country underneath the skin.

Shadows stir in mine.

Shadow of eating the blue flesh of the stranger
under the olivetree.
Shadow of walking easily among the animals.
Shadow of skin of grass.

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Shadow of bones of dreams.
Shadow of father
wearing hip-high rubber boots,
banker's pinstriped pants and homburg, wading
through dusk of 1933, guiding
tinkling Holsteins to the saltlick
where I wait, whistling, for him.
Shadow of learning words have the blood of birds.

—Jesus!
I feel superb, rocking in my seat
as our sardine tincan Ozark
powerhouses, barreling along the runway
to haul us above abundant blocks of cloudbank.

Trying to give tongue
to those shadows
is like feeling a woman, moaning, come
as you caress her clitoris
and come again—her feet tattoo your back—
when you're inside
her, pumping, laughing, coming too.

Or are we at times a kind of shaman too—
abandoning body to wander
in this air and light, seeking his face—
the god of barbarous origin?

My mouth of the shadow of a bird

My mouth wet earth

My mouth of blood and snow

My mouth a turbulence of ghosts

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Dick Gallup

Riding Down Grandma's Driveway

I was thinking where are we all going when we were
Going through the snow on the ground, underbrush
Beneath like the New England personality going
Somewhere like a bump on the horizon 1946
                That is now
People come together in this world
Which is unbelievably your world, a Peace
March which no one sees, like the rails
Which wither daily, others pop up in the air.

All these people show up hating America
As if anything could take it away
A child's world
And then morning flushes itself down the toilet
A beautiful extinction
                the death of that America
Resembling a big rural soap-opera
                crossing the grass divider
Or my grandmother's driveway, a graveled detritus

Mr. Everett Dirksen.
Do I hate sunflowers?

Do misty roses mean it's all over baby blue? when
The fire-escape generation arrives with their parasols
A sort of psychedelic Republicanism reminds
Me to keep my eyes open to Frank O'Hara and America
Which streams by me in my head submerged
By all that hate they don't really need to show me

I know all about it down here where
Love is the same thing for me and my grandmother.

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Clark Coolidge

Bee Elk

arch film duds
"Cheever" can aiming laps
dorm sieve

nor black tugs toward colog
alight paramecium bloom ice
chigger geer dads
block

but a prime buds
Keds nor slam up labs
sham a shatter
puree

tins
clock sauna
Coit ether

till sit mid sides
sign laughter
Anthracite

tea lure

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

Kenward Elmslie is the author of two books of poems, *Pavilions* and *Power Plant Poems*, and the opera librettos *Miss Julie*, *The Sweet Bye and Bye*, and *Lizzie Borden*.

Edward Hoagland published *The Peacock's Tail* in 1965. At present he is finishing a journal of interviews called *Notes from the Century Before* and is working on a novel. He has taught at Rutgers, Sarah Lawrence, and City College.

John Phillips' fiction and journalism have appeared in many magazines; a novel, *The Second Happiest Day*, was published in 1953. "Bleat Blodgette" is an excerpt from a work in progress.

INTERVIEW

Herbert Gold's most recent novel, *Fathers*, was published in New York by Random House and in London by Secker & Warburg. He is now teaching at Stanford.

ART

Gianfranco Baruchello is a painter interested in "extra-literary" experiments. He has had one-man shows in Europe and in New York, where he is represented by the Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery.

Lucio Fontana received the *Grand Prix* for Italian painting at the last Venice Biennale. His work can be seen at the Marlborough Galleries in New York and Rome.

POETRY

John Ashbery's most recent collection of poems, *Rivers and Mountains*, was published in 1966 by Holt, Rinehart & Winston; *Selected Poems* was recently published in England by Jonathan Cape.

Michael Benedikt's poems have appeared most recently in *Poetry*, *The Sixties*, and *Transatlantic Review*. He is the editor of several anthologies of modern drama, and a regular staff member of *Art News* and *Art International*.

Bill Berkson has contributed poetry and art criticism to various magazines, including *Art and Literature*, *Poetry*, and *Art News*. A collection of poems, *Saturday Night*, was published by Tibor de Nagy Editions. He has edited *In Memory of My Feelings* (The Museum of Modern Art, 1967), a selection of poems by Frank O'Hara.

Paul Carroll has published poems in *Evergreen Review*, *Big Table*, and *City Lights Journal*. He is at present engaged in editing an anthology of poetry.

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Tom Clark is the author of a play, *The Emperor of the Animals*, and two pamphlets of poetry, *The Sand Burg* and *Airplanes*. He edited the *Once* series of books and magazines from Brightlingsea, England. He is the poetry editor of THE PARIS REVIEW.

Clark Coolidge was editor of *Joglars*, and has published two books of poems with Lines Press. He is currently a drummer with The Serpent Power, a San Francisco rock and roll group.

Dick Gallup's published works include *Hinges*, a book of poems ("C" Press, 1965) and *The Bingo*, a play (Mother Press, 1966.)

Barbara Guest has published two books of poems, *The Location of Things* and *Poems. Blue Stairs* will be brought out by Corinth in 1967.

Kenneth Koch is the author of *Thank You*, a book of poems, *Bertha*, a collection of plays, and *Ko, or a Season on Earth*. He is on the faculty of the English Department of Columbia University.

Frank Lima's collection of poems, *Inventory*, was published by Tibor de Nagy Editions in 1964. His poems have appeared in *Evergreen Review*, *Mother*, *"C"*, and *Art and Literature*.

Harry Mathews, whose novels *The Conversions* and *Tlooth* appeared in part in THE PARIS REVIEW, has contributed poems to numerous reviews, among them *Locus Solus*, *Art and Literature*, and *"C"*.

Ron Padgett's collaboration with Ted Berrigan, *Bean Spasms*, has recently been published by Kulchur Press. He is working on a translation of Apollinaire's *The Poet Assassinated* that will be illustrated by Jim Dine and published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

James Schuyler has published a novel, *Alfred and Guinevere*, and two volumes of poetry. A collection of his poems is scheduled to appear as a Paris Review Edition in 1968.

Tony Towle received a second Poets Foundation award in 1966. Tibor de Nagy Editions will soon publish his first volume of poems, *After Dinner We Take a Drive Into the Night*.

Philip Whalen is the author of several books of poems and drawings. A novel, *You Didn't Even Try*, was published recently by Coyote Books.

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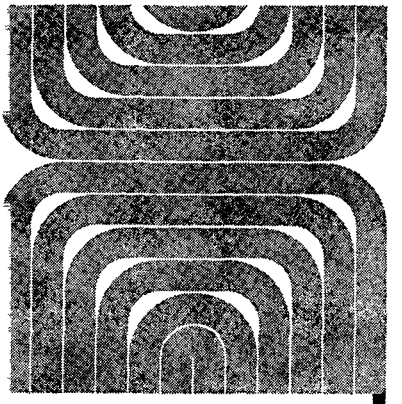

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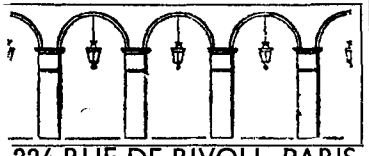

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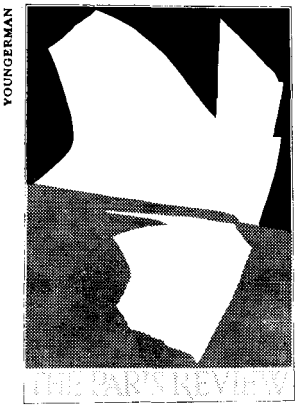

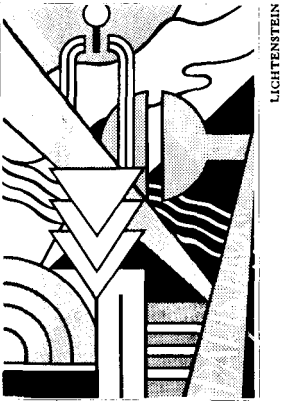

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